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S E R M O N S

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY

GEORGE WALKER, F.R.S.

Minister of a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in
Nottingham.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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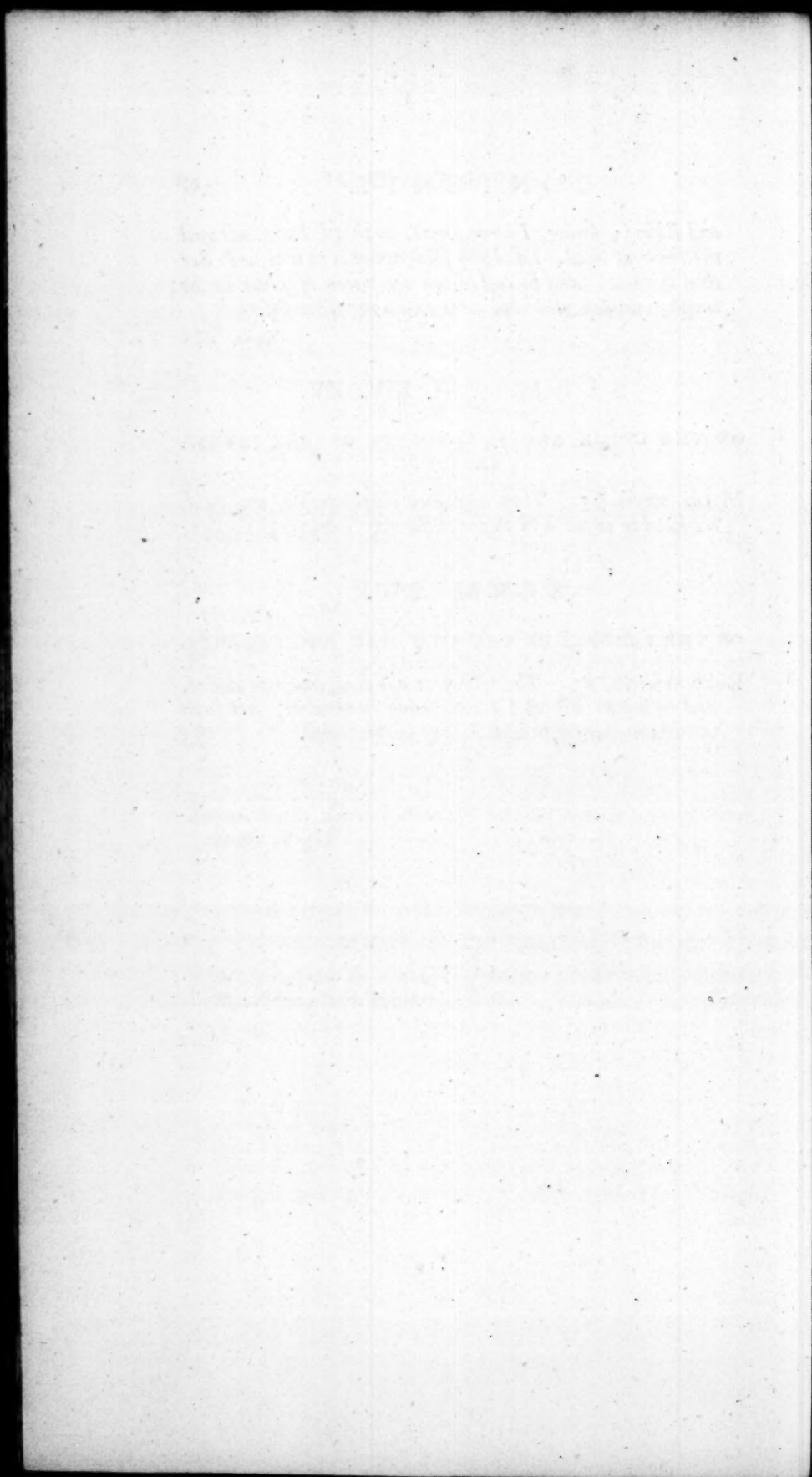
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S E R M O N I.

ON SELF-CONCEALMENT.

2 SAM. XII. 7.

*And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the
Man.*

I N all appeals, to the conscience or to the heart, a plain and simple address is the most successful: history is full of examples of this natural eloquence; but it would be difficult to find a more striking and beautiful example than in the story before us.

VOL. I.

B

No

No elaborate dissertation, no pompous harangue on the enormities of adultery and murder, could so instantly have struck the criminal's heart, or so affect the reader, as this simple and natural tale which the prophet tells the king. The effect, which it produced on David himself, is anticipated by the mind of every one who reads it. Conviction is obtained, and judgment is passed, before the criminal is brought to the bar; and, when he is arraigned, if any disposition to acquit him, or to mitigate the sentence, should then insinuate itself, the sentence is already recorded, and the mind cannot turn upon itself to reverse its decree. —Yet there is an art in the prophet's tale, which common geniuses would not have reached. It required great knowledge of human nature, and great judgment, to have invented such a mode of addressing an offender of his exalted rank, to have contrived so delicate and well-managed a story, to have kept out of view the stern forbidding front of accusation, to have diverted
ed

ed the eye of the criminal from himself, and, by a very moving case in a very different scene of life, appeal only to the general principles of humanity and justice; and yet, in the very nature of the verdict, which this general appeal extorts, involve and condemn himself. It is certainly one of the most elegant and interesting fables upon record: the crime is of the highest order, and an ordinary genius would have sunk below the dignity of the subject in attempting to reach it in the way of a tale or fable. But the mind is here not offended in passing from the fiction to the crime, and the preparation of the story exhibits David in a view of aggravated guilt.

In these books of the Old and New Testament there are beauties of a very superior stile, which we should be more sensible of, if our taste were not dulled by being too early introduced and familiarised to them; but in the composition of fable there is nothing of heathen production which is worthy to be compared to

them. The one before us, and the fables of our Lord, particularly those of the wounded Samaritan and the prodigal son, have an elegance, a charm, a dignity, which every one can better feel than express. There is a great resemblance in one of the parables of our Lord to this fable of Nathan, which, I believe, has never before been noticed. The manner of the prophet, in bringing forth the guilt of David to himself, and leading him to his own conviction, appears to be imitated by our Saviour in his representation of the last day. In the appeal to the unkind and uncharitable, who stand before his bar, our Lord supposes himself to have been the object of their unpitying indifference and neglect; they revolt at the mention of such a charge, and rise in the consciousness of their innocence; but in this very emotion they admit the guilt of a similar conduct, and sink under the majesty of our Lord's application: " Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of
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“ the least of these your brethren, ye have
“ done it unto me.”

It is not necessary to cite the words of the story, either of David's crime, or of the well-conducted address of the prophet, as I can hardly suppose any one to be ignorant of them. David's conduct, throughout the whole, is generally considered as a striking instance of the power of self-imposition. Having so lately perpetrated the most horrid and complicated crimes, he discovers no sympathy for guilt; he enters instantly into the baseness and cruelty of another's conduct, and, in the character of the king and judge of Israel, denounces vengeance on the unjust and merciless spoiler. His anger was greatly kindled, and he said, ‘ as the Lord liveth, the man, who hath
‘ done this, shall surely die; nor shall he
‘ only in his own person pay the punishment of the cruelty he hath acted, but
‘ compensation shall be made to the innocent sufferer; a four-fold retribution shall
‘ be rendered out of his effects for what the

‘ poor man has been robbed of, because
‘ he hath shewn no compassion.’ The
prophet arrests him in the fervour of his
virtuous zeal, and instantly turns his eye
upon himself, upon the similar but more
horrid picture of his own late transacted
guilt: ‘ O king, thou art the man; in the
‘ most tender interests and rights of human
‘ nature thou hast shewn no compassion.
‘ Does thy spirit rise with indignation
‘ against the wretch, who tore from the
‘ poor man his ewe lamb, all his wealth,
‘ the fondling of his bosom; and hast thou
‘ never yet felt for Uriah’s injuries? Shall
‘ no vengeance fall on the robber of his
‘ wife and of his life? Ah! by what trea-
‘ chery, by what arts and discipline of self-
‘ ishness, hast thou tutored thy soul to this
‘ gross concealment; alive to others’ crimes,
‘ dead to thy own, as if thy very virtue
‘ were awed and silenced to utter not a
‘ whisper against thy own wickedness? But,
‘ what thy conscience would not do in the
‘ case of self, it has done in the case of
‘ another.

‘ another. Thy sentence I seize; it is just.
‘ I have only to shew thee the criminal;
‘ thou art the man. The ewe lamb was
‘ torn away by thy unpitying hand, and,
‘ lest the cries of the injured should reach
‘ thee, thou silencedst them by his death.’

But we have not to do with David’s crimes, any farther than to lead you to an affecting view of the power of self-concealment; to prepare you for doing each of you to yourselves the office of the prophet; and not, in the important business of self-inspection and self-correction, to wait till a messenger from heaven, till some awful correction of providence, or the more awful Judge, whose sentence decides our fate, conduct your view into the hiding-places of guilt, and from your own unwilling judgment point out the man to you. God be praised, if the issue of our preaching generally terminate in this happy effect, and you do not sit to be vainly affected with a tale or representation, without conceiving that you are interested therein, and

that the application is directed in a greater or a less degree to every one of you. Few of us reach the height of David's crime; not one, I trust. Yet, we have our crimes; and, whether in the management of these crimes, in covering them from our view, in seeing them not at all, or in glossing over and extenuating their guilt, we may not many of us shake hands with him, I will not, with all my friendship, say for you. Self-concealment and self-palliation are the easiest, the most universal, but the most dangerous, practice that human nature learns; it is that which defeats the office of conscience, and annihilates to many all the utility of public instruction. In a prophet, it was allowed to say plainly, even to a king, thou art the man: you would think it strange, and be much offended, if, in many instances of the highest moment to your peace and everlasting happiness, we should presume to say so to the meanest of you. Well, then! it will be at least allowed us, that we put you upon your guard, that we summon

summon you to be the monitors and reprovers of yourselves, that we warn you against the traitor within, and protect you, as far as premonition can do, against every approach of a dishonest self.

I have not attempted in any formal way to prove to you, that David's is no singular case; that, like him, it is the habit of criminals to get entangled in some beloved sins, yet see them not, or see them not in all their deformity, so as to stir up repentance in the soul, and lead to a virtuous atonement. If we take but a very cursory view of the conduct of men, and compare their manner, their carriage, their airs of innocence, and their self-satisfaction, with their methods of life, we can have no doubt that the sinners of this world, in every day as well as David's day, omit to do that justice to themselves, which it is their duty and their interest to do, and which, by a more knowing and equitable Judge, will some time be done. In love with their sins, but in no love with the correction of sin,
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they procure a false and dangerous peace, by cultivating a dishonesty of heart, which passes no fair and moral judgment upon themselves and their conduct. We should hardly know that they had a moral principle within them, but from the judgment they pass upon others, from whom a partial tenderness does not turn away their eye. Human life is as it were one great picture of this contradiction between the opinion of self and the opinion of our neighbour. Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? is a severe reproof, which, I fear, is as applicable to the followers of Christ as to the followers of Moses. What is more notorious than to see men, of all distinctions, the great and low, the rich and poor, the wise man and the fool, the better and the worse of our kind, mere strangers, in innumerable instances, to their own real character; ignorant to a wonder, or affecting to be ignorant, of such faults and miscarriages as are obvious

obvious to all but themselves; discerning enough, in similar instances, where themselves are out of the question; but having neither an eye to see, nor a principle to judge, their own actions? They even reproach each other with this blindness and partiality; and, generally, the keenness and severity of censure, towards others, is proportioned to the insensibility and tenderness with which they act towards themselves. If the anger of recrimination, or the honesty of friendship, tell them of their faults, their darling sins, they know them not; they are affronted and offended; they repel the charge as false and scandalous, and labour to vindicate themselves with all the zeal of injured innocence.

What is the experience of our profession, but a melancholy proof of this self-deception and blindness; this habit of inapplication to a man's own heart? I am far from supposing that none are led to self inspection and self-correction by the lessons and representations of the pulpit: if it
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were so, the profession would indeed be of little service to mankind; and the mockery of instruction, which reaches the heart of no one, might as well be laid aside. It is a secret assurance of benefit to some, that encourages us in our duty, and is a nobler and more generous compensation than any other which the profession yields. In the make of the human heart, and in the excellence of the christian dispensation, there is and must be a foundation for this hope. Though, if even none were mended, nor led by instruction to progressive improvement, yet to preserve the world with even the decent mixture of good that is in it, and prevent it from growing continually worse and worse, would be a great and valuable service. But, still, that an institution, so designed to ransack all the crevices of the heart, so directed to the best principles and the best interests of a human being, and which is enlightened by the discoveries, fraught with the promises, and armed with the terrors of the Gospel, should not be
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more productive of good effect ; should not lead every one to know himself, to see, to own, to correct, what is bad ; is principally to be ascribed to this dishonest management of our own hearts ; to this trick, which so many of us learn, of never bringing instruction and correction home to ourselves. Is a vicious character exhibited from the pulpit ? The man to whom, in every one's judgment, it is the most applicable, and who ought to feel himself the most concerned, is perhaps the least affected. He can tell you well, if he were asked, whom it fits, and who might with great utility carry the instruction away with him into his closet ; but, whether his kind attention to another be well or ill applied, his dear self is no way touched with it ; it raises no emotions in his own breast ; no shame, no compunction, no remorse, is awakened in his own heart ; it says not to him, with awe and terror, thou art the man. All of you, judging for David, can feel the force of the prophet's well-told tale, nor do you wonder

wonder at all that the application reached the royal criminal's heart. Yet you, or some of you, are the men, in every instance in which we speak to you; though, like the prophet, we point you not out, when perhaps we have you in view. This the delicacy of our present manners forbids; but, in many an instance, it would be gross to say, that you give any appearance of having made the application for yourselves. Nathan, with a commission from God, tells his tale: we tell ours also for the same purpose, though assuredly pleading no special commission, yet acting under a sense of that general commission for which every minister of good must answer at the bar of God. Our tale is not of adultery or murder, but perhaps of crimes which completely vitiate the soul, which the spirit of Christianity cannot mix with, which the virtue of the Gospel forbids and threatens, which are no preparative for heaven, and which have not the promise of heaven. Perhaps it is of crimes akin to adultery; of that de-
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based sensuality, which can meditate and plan the destruction of innocence, or find its regular gratification in the trade of prostitution, and in hardening the heart to the most horrid spectacles of infamy and wretchedness that human life, in all its forms of woe, has ever yet exhibited ! Perhaps it is a tale of a voluptuous rich man, who has no more appetites, nor more capacity of appetite, than his poorer fellow-creatures ; yet contrives to waste, in the wantonness of artificial luxury, the blessed means of mitigating their miseries. Or it may be that our tale represents to you that wretchedest of all things, called a miser ; one who has neither the spirit of this world nor of another ; who hoards up for his heir what the example of the father forbids the son to use ; but, what is the strangest contradiction of all, who thinks himself to be a Christian, without affection or charity ; who expects to go to heaven, the abode of kind and friendly spirits, without ever having felt

felt for a fellow-creature's woes, and without ever having practised one of those virtues, for which he will be questioned at the last day. But, whether our representation be of this or that vicious character, surely it is with the intention that every one should, with this representation in his hand, visit his own heart, and, with a humbled and a chastened spirit, acknowledge the likeness, in whatever degree he finds it; nor could the application fail, nor fail to appear in the fruits of a corrected life, if, as the last poor refuge of vice, you had not learnt this dangerous art, of hiding yourselves from yourselves, of turning away your eye from your own picture. Not seeing itself in its own deformity, the mind can go on in the practice of what it would be shocked to look upon. Having no view but to lead you to know and correct yourselves, your attention is roving around for some other subject of application; you fix the charge some where or no where; or you amuse yourselves with deciding on the performance

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ance of the preacher, as if it were a mere sportive exhibition of genius or fancy; in fine, you do any thing, but the very thing which you should do, the bringing the charge home, with all its serious reflections and salutary improvement, to yourselves. And what is all this, but the dishonest concealment, which it is our wish to convince you of and which it is our wish to guard you against, as the last fatal enemy to which you can subject your moral character and your future expectations? He, who questions this truth, knows little of the ways of the world, is a poor observer of men and things, and, if he be not ever suspicious of this habit stealing upon himself, has but little regard either for his own honour or safety.

However, it must be allowed, that all is not self-ignorance which affects to be such. Pride, and a false shame, and a stubbornness of spirit, often disclaim the crime, which conscience secretly reproaches us with; nor will suffer any tell-tale to appear

abroad of that uneasiness and remorse which is felt within. But the imposture, which is first practised upon the world, frequently ends in imposing upon self, and in all the ruinous consequences of self-deception. It is generally moreover only in crimes of a higher magnitude, which carry with them the utter loss of character with the world, that the front of pride sets itself against its own internal conviction, and affects to wear an innocence in the face of men to which its heart gives the lie; and, in such crimes, external concealment is carefully studied, and that depravity, which the world would not bear, is hidden from the world's view. But, in habits of ordinary sin, such as falsehood, scandal, worldly spirit, avarice, unkindness, uncharitableness; the world, at least the virtuous part of the world, generally knows a man a great deal better than he knows himself. The truth is, in those indulgencies which enter into the whole course of life, if a man did not appear to his own eye in a much better character than
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he deserves, he could not go on in the indulgence; he would either regain a better mind, or he would have a very hell to carry about with him. The determination to proceed renders it a much easier thing than would be imagined, to take no notice of the criminal colour of our actions, or to divert the mind from thinking of it in a moral view, or to dismiss the thought with indifference, as if our way of life were only the general course of human nature, and the almost unavoidable appendage of human imperfection: every thing is then settled with the sinner; he becomes as satisfied with himself, as if there were nothing at all to blame; a stupor, a dulness of conscience, is contracted; and what at first was merely an unwillingness, an aversion to reflection, because reflection presented nothing pleasant to him, ends at length in an absolute incapacity of discriminating the character of his ruling motives and actions. Some slight misgivings that all is not perfectly

right may perhaps now and then intervene ; but these suspicions become weaker and weaker ; self-love takes care that the reproach shall never be very serious and awful ; and the conscience is completely lulled by finding no marked rejection of him in the world, but rather a favourable reception, as being of that fair, and dressed, and decent character, which his own flattery had reported to him ; in fine, he persuades himself, that he may fairly hold up his head amongst the generality of his fellow-creatures, and that all the sublimity of piety and virtue is not to be expected from him.

Yet all this enchantment, in which the exercise of the moral powers appears to be completely suspended, is often dissolved in an instant by some of those casualties, which are the lot of human beings, and by which providence either chastises careless sinners in their course of life, or, if the time of correction be past, anticipates the sentence which the righteous Judge will hereafter pass on their conduct. In such a sudden
revolution,

revolution, the disappointed statesman felt emotions, which his course of life had not promised, and exhibited something of a holy fervour in his new-born repentance:

Oh, Cromwell! Cromwell!

Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal
I serv'd the king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.

The ruin of fortune, the dear object of all our cares; the death of the heir to whom all our wise cares have been directed; the shock of sickness, which with a change of bodily habit often effects a total revolution of mind; the solemn face of death; dispel the illusions of flattery and self-deceit, bring back conscience with all its power, and shew the wretched, crest-fallen, trembling sinner to himself in all his nakedness of goodness, and in all the truth of his immoral character. If a generous shame and repentance succeed, and if repentance may yet be accepted, happy is it for him, that by this discipline of providence he has been brought at last to know himself, and

to repair the waste of his former negligence and blindness. But often, alas! the recovery of sight is only to alarm and discourage him, to spread dismay over his soul, and prepare him for the overwhelming judgment of his God.

But even this late, and sometimes ineffectual restoration to self-knowledge does not always take place; the blind, the hardened heart, the intoxication of security, is frequently carried on to the last moment of life. The world and all the face of it may change, but the mind changes not; and, with a character that never could stand the test of the virtuous demands of the Gospel, the poor wretch meets eternity, with as composed an ignorance of himself, and satisfaction in his conduct, as he had walked through life with.

He dies, and makes no sign,

is the manner in which many a thorough sinner leaves this world.

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These are awful truths, and which ought to come home to every one with the most awful application. Every human being is interested in them; every human being is in some degree the deceiver of himself, and therefore if he have any well-meaning left, ought to receive the warning with humility and thankfulness. He should feel himself disposed to the most vigorous exertions; to the severest scrutiny of his own mind; to the severest command over his passions, his partialities, and his prejudices; that he may, as far as is possible, be protected against self-ignorance, self-concealment, and self-imposition. To promote this end, let us endeavour to bring into one view the information which our survey of this character of frail man may happily have suggested.

There are three beings who have an interest in our character, and whose favourable judgment of our character we are interested to procure; these are, self, our fellow-creature, and God. From the ma-

nagement of these springs our ruin or our safety.

Of these three, the judgment of our fellow-creature is the least important, because he is least related to us; yet self-ignorance, and all its fatal errors, generally flow from giving to the world, and the opinion of the world, the highest consequence in our esteem. Not that any one, as an act of calm and sober judgment, makes this estimation of his fellow-creature; but his fellow-creature so meets him in every movement that he makes, so associates himself with all his interests and pursuits in this world, that he is easily seduced into the habit of courting him by every means that can be reconciled with the indulgence of his passions and his pleasures. Here generally originate the arts of deceit and imposition, in which man becomes so great a proficient as at length to impose upon himself, and almost to conceive that he imposes upon his God; at least to conduct himself towards God as if he had effected this end. There

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is a wisdom in this, that wisdom of the world, which attracted our Saviour's notice; for, if a temporary peace is to be procured at any rate, and with the determined indulgence of what is wrong; if we wish to go through this world, at least with as little disturbance as possible, it is wise to commence the operations of art and deception where they are the most easy, where we have the most immediate interest in deceiving, and where we have, or think we have, almost a certainty of success. Whatever eye may be turned upon a man's own heart, the eye of fellow-man penetrates not into that recess, and he can only form his conjecture of the real temper within from those external movements and appearances which are supposed to indicate it. What we know therefore will not abide the judgment of fellow-men we carefully conceal; we assume the appearance which is opposed thereto; we put on as good a face as possible before the world; in all our visits to it, we dress ourselves out for its view; we gain

gain the esteem of some, the decent opinion of others, and a favourable reception perhaps with all. Seduced by this success, we insensibly pass into a more favourable opinion of ourselves; we arrogate that false and undeserved esteem, which we have artfully stolen from man as a tribute due to our characters.

This inclination to a more favourable judgment of self, and the flattery resulting from the very art that we have practised on the world, is aided and encouraged by the serious interest which we have in self; by the necessity of procuring something of peace within, and of appearing in a tolerably decent and respectable view to ourselves. The good opinion of a man's own mind is only to be attained, by parting with what is ill, or by extenuating the ill and giving it a false colour; by contrasting it with what is really good in us, which we proudly bring forward to our view; and opposing it to the vices which we have no inclination to, or to the numerous ill characters

acters with which we may be advantageously compared. By these arts and management our standard of moral character is gradually lowered, so as at length perfectly to fit our own size; conscience is prostituted to interest, and caresses us with a prostitute applause.

The last deception is to render God a party in the same interest. This would seem to be beyond the ingenuity of man; there is such a sanctity, and venerableness, accompanying the character of God in every one's mind, that it appears almost impossible to practise any deceit or imposture here; and indeed it is not a little difficult to say, how this daring imposition is effected, in the variety of characters, and with the variety of religious faiths, that have been adopted by men. Some find their refuge in infidelity; some in thinking not of God at all; but many more in the very bosom of religion itself: I mean of what they conceive to be religion; and it is wonderfully convenient to them, that the Christian

tian world presents a faith which may be accommodated to different tastes and forms of mind. Where a faith is systematically immoral, we wonder not that the desired tranquillity is obtained; but nothing exhibits the power of self-deception in so striking a view, as when we find that even a liberal and severely moral creed can be submitted and accommodated to exceedingly immoral characters. This appears to be effected in innumerable instances; but, how they accomplish the deception, God alone can completely say; for, though the work is their own, they are themselves, I believe, incompetent to account for it. This is certain, that the professors, of every sect, repose too much in the observances of religion, and in the punctuality and decency of a religious exterior; and that prayers and confessions sing a lullaby to many a bad man, let his speculative faith be what it will. They consider them as atonements which God is pleased with, and which God will accept; they magnify their ideas of
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human frailty, and they suppose the mercy of God to be adapted to it; they console themselves with the persuasion that they are still superior to the ordinary character of men, and that the bulk of mankind cannot be destined to perdition. In fine, as it is necessary at any rate that they should stand well with God, they take heaven by violence, in a manner that entered not into the contemplation of the Author of the maxim; and, being settled in this hope, they rest perfectly satisfied with themselves; and, soothed by the flatteries of an artificial religion, they make no farther enquiry into the truth and merit of their characters. The business of self-examination is then closed; and, with all the ignorance, and all the impositions which they had been practising upon their own minds, they go undisturbed through life; they face death, and step into eternity.

SERMON

S E R M O N I I .

ON D I S C O N T E N T .

I KINGS XXI. 4, 5.

And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers.

And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

I N the words I have read to you is exhibited a very striking instance of an ungoverned mind, which the habitude of power and prosperity, and the inexperience of disappointment, had reduced to the impotence and pettishness of a child. A king of Israel, furrounded with the smiles and flatteries of a throne, casts his eye upon a
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little field, contiguous to his palace, and, thinking it a convenient situation for a garden, abandons his mind to the lust of acquiring it; as if this one convenience were necessary to the rounding the circle of his possessions, and the want of it rendered insipid every other comfort. Swelling, we may be sure, with the plenitude of his power, and expecting that every thing must give way to a monarch's request; he asks it of Naboth, its owner, either in the way of purchase or exchange: but, to his astonishment, Naboth returns a flat denial; God forbid, says he, that I should give up the inheritance of my fathers to thee. This, at first view, carries the appearance of a very rude and furly proceeding on the part of Naboth; a very unhandsome return to a fair and honourable proposal on the part of the king; while every monarch, perhaps, will sympathise with his fellow-king, and almost think that the churlish subject met with no more than a deserved treatment in the unhappy issue. But, this is one instance

stance, of many, in which a too hasty decision, on the first face of the thing, is found to be wrong, and may serve as a caution against that petulant criticism, wherewith many determine on independent passages of Scripture. A Jew was expressly forbidden by the Mosaic law to alienate the lands which descended to him from his ancestors; in the case of debt only does it appear to have been permitted; while even in this case the purchaser was obliged to restore it, whenever the debtor or his posterity were of ability to redeem it; and, at any rate, it returned to the family in the year of jubilee. So careful had their great legislator been to preserve to each tribe and family the original allotment of land, which was made at the conquest of Canaan. The request of Ahab, therefore, was in itself illegal, and prohibited by the law, which every Jew acknowledged to be divine; and Naboth, if he had yielded to the king's request, would have offended against the laws of his country, and against God, whose

authority was respected in these laws. The king ought to have repelled the desire in its first approach to his mind; nor could any thing, but the wantonness of royalty, have encouraged a Jew to entertain the wish of being possessed, by whatever means, of the inheritance of another Jew. But Ahab was no respecter of God, of man, or of the laws; the prohibition was no check to his lust, nor could it reconcile him to Naboth's refusal. Unaccustomed to opposition, he ruminated in gloomy discontent over the denial; he retired to his house, heavy and displeased; he refused the ordinary refreshment; and appears to have wrought his mind up to such a height of resentment against the innocent object, as to meet with too much readiness the horrid proposal of his more abandoned queen.

We behold therefore, in Ahab, a striking example of the sad consequences of an ungoverned mind; a mind, that abandons itself to its passions, that suffers discontent to brood over disappointment, and, in order
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to possess the object which it lusteth after, can too easily be reconciled to injustice, violence, and cruelty. Discontent, or rather those passions, whose misrule leads to discontent, are the source of all this mischief; though it must be acknowledged, that every discontented and mismanaged mind does not venture on the crimes which this royal tyrant perpetrated. But, in all, it has this tendency; and the crimes of iniquity, oppression, and cruelty, acted on this stage between man and man, are too often derived from this fatal source. Ahab's conduct is the ordinary conduct of despotic kings; their lives are little other than the history of such deeds; and, if their own minds do not immediately suggest to them some way of violence to possess the thing which they lust after, yet their abhorrence of disappointment inclines them to the reception of any wicked counsels, which the officious pandars of their lusts are so ready to administer. To possess what a king has fixed his eye upon, whether it be a field, a

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wife,

wife, a daughter, a province, or a kingdom, is to be in the most dangerous predicament of crime; and he is the king's friend, who can teach the shortest way of removing the criminal possessor, and subjecting the vacant possession to his royal master's will. Thus does unbounded power lay waste the mind of man, and, in one view, exhibit all the feebleness of a puling child, and the cruelty of a savage. Yes! and all those elevated stations, which more or less approach to a throne, which are accustomed to the easy gratification of their desires, and know not to brook denial, by having not been educated in its school; too often act the same unmanly and the same iniquitous part on the stage of the world. The same evil counsellors watch their discontented moments to whisper to these gods, that they were not born for controul, and that a wretch of a lower order is but as a worm to be crushed in their path. And, in all the stations of life, the lust of power, the lust of pleasure, and the
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lust of wealth, when they have gotten possession of the mind, and when habitual indulgence has weakened a wise controul, exhibit the same degraded pictures of ungoverned desire and whining discontent, and stimulate to the same horrid outrages of crime.

To what other source can we refer the solemn gloom which sits on the brow of thousands, whose real situation in life invites them to cheerfulness and social ease? To what other source, the insolence of their successful competitors, who are only preparing their minds for the same unmanly fall? Whence all the broils, and turbulencies, and iniquities, of human life, but from this dissatisfaction with our proper state? and whence the eagerness to get the coveted thing of our neighbour, whether it be his rank, his table, his palace, his wife, his daughter, or his trade? This conjures up, as from hell, to trouble the streams of life, those horrid characters, which this improved age of the world teems with—the fac-

tious and unprincipled partizan, who, to accomplish his selfish views, gives truth, and liberty, and country, to the winds; the smiling seducer, who lives but to trample on the dearest rights of domestic life; the deep designing tradesman, who fattens on the ruin of the artless and the honest; or the villains of lower life, who with naked violence break asunder all the bands of society, and whom their ungoverned passions hurry, through a short course of robbery and murder, to a public death.

The example of Ahab is then a lesson to all; in him we behold the workings of that undisciplined passion, which leads to every unmanly, to every criminal, character. Oh! with such pictures before us, let not any one slander that self-command and self-denial, that decent temperate rule of the passions, that mild submission to providence and superiority to all the disappointments and temptations of this life, from the inspiring hope of a better; which constitute

tribute the wisest lesson, and the greatest blessing of the Gospel.

But, if crime be out of the question, the discontent, which springs out of licentious desire; and the not cultivating the self-command of a christian, are alone evils which claim all our attention. These we are all subject to; and, in a state of society, which opens every door to indulgence, these, which are the natural offspring of indulgence, eat into all the happiness of life, indispose the mind to its sober duties, and unfit it for virtues of a higher cast, which are peculiarly characteristic of a christian, and peculiarly preparative for heaven. We wonder, that, amidst the opulence and luxuries of a throne, one poor adjoining field should embitter a monarch's enjoyment, and make him act so poor a part, as to throw himself in passion upon his bed, and refuse even to eat, because he could not add this trifle to his ample and splendid possessions. To Ahab's folly we are quick-sighted enough; but we see not that, in a lower station,

tion, we discover the same temper, and, if we were to change conditions, would, under the influence of this temper, assuredly act the same mean and humbled part, though we might not be tempted to appease our discontent by the same horrid crimes. Discontent is appropriated to no particular condition, but in every condition fixes its unsatisfied eye on the thing which we want; it is the vineyard of Naboth, poor as it is, compared to what we already have, that discomposes, unmans so many of us; and to us all, compared with the prospects of a christian, every coveted object, which corrodes our minds, is but as Naboth's field. Look around in life, look upon each other, or, what is less invidious and more becomes you, look upon yourselves; and say, whether incidents of as little significance are not every day disturbing your peace, souring your tempers, breaking in upon your regular line of duty, and discomposing you both for God and man. Why are you so out of humour with
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with your fellow-creature, with your family, with yourselves, and with every thing which a bounteous providence has poured into your lap? It is not that you want the necessaries, the conveniences, or even the superfluities, of life; plenty waits upon your call; respect and honour would attend you, did you possess a more governed mind, a more chearful and liberal behaviour to your fellow-creature; not one ingredient of a temporal happiness is wanting that modesty could desire or wisdom pray for: the only want is from within, and this ingratitude to God, and sin against yourselves, avenge both God and self. A few tempting objects, with which heaven means to prove your moderation, a few petty disappointments, by which heaven means to exercise your patience and your piety, continually irritate your passions, steal you from yourselves, and lessen you in the eye both of God and man. With your lust after the one, the palace of Ahab would not please; while your fretfulness under
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the other acts on your minds like the withered gourd on the peevish prophet, whom it suffered not to rejoice in the mercy of an appeased God, and the rescue of a million of his fellow-creatures from destruction.

But you are secretly asking, perhaps, what does this long introduction tend to, and when shall I properly commence my sermon? Why! my introduction is my sermon; I meant only to make the example of Ahab the occasion of some useful observations on the sad manner in which many of us husband our minds, and misuse the conveniences and blessings of life. But if something of method be required, I will apply the remainder of my address to the suggesting the cure of this ungoverned mind, whose evil I have been representing to you, both in its degrading and criminal effects.

Having discovered the general causes of discontent, the cure might be prescribed in a very few words; remove the cause: but, the

the cure of those maladies, which afflict the human mind, is not effected in so summary a way, and it would answer an equal purpose to give the response in a more summary way, be not discontented. The physician of the soul must enter into its weaknesses, convince it of its follies, and persuade as well as prescribe. It is certain, however, that the knowledge of the cause does point to the cure of the disorder; nor can there be any doubt, but that if envy, pride, covetousness, and other irregular passions, be the fruitful sources of discontent, no cure can be effected, till the mind be rid of these tormenting guests; in fine, till it be reduced to a sober and well-governed state, suited to the condition of its present being, and the higher views of its nature. If against our own peace we will foster and cherish all unsatisfied lust, nor direct our views to nobler objects, we must pay the penalty of our folly, and feel the lash of the tyrants to which we have yielded ourselves. He only can recover a state of calm enjoyment,

ment, who sets his whole will against these intruders, and in whom such a happy change, both of disposition and habit, has taken place, as may be sufficient to repress if not extinguish these disorderly affections.

But to an ungoverned and discontented mind these are hard lessons. They comprehend, indeed, one mode of cure, but exhibited in the most difficult form, and from which, if we expect success, we must prepare the patient by some previous applications. Such of these as occur to me I shall lay before you with plainness and honesty, intermixing therewith advice of a higher form, where it may be seasonably introduced.

One preparative for the cure of discontent, at least in some of its most distressful instances, will often be found in contemplating the occasion of it; and in calmly and impartially considering, whether the evil, of which we complain, may not be remedied by a change of temper and conduct in ourselves; or, if the hour of remedy be now past, by
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discovering that it is only the natural and proper punishment of our folly, imprudence, or vice. This review must be productive of good ; it will either bring back the blessing we have lost, as the reward of a rectified temper and conduct ; or this rectified temper and conduct will lead to modest humble resignation, chastise the intemperate passions which are the food of discontent, open to our view new sources of comfort and even of enjoyment ; and thus, from the good-tempered lessons of humility, repentance and religion, furnish an ample compensation for the sufferings we have not undeservedly incurred. — I compassionate suffering, wherever or in whatever way it is presented to me ; but I have no sympathy with the gloomy and the discontented ; especially where the mind should rather be turned upon the view and correction of its own ill conduct.

How many of the evils and pressures of human life lie at the door of our own negligence, laziness, and foolishness? Among
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the numerous sons of pining envy, and ill-humour, and complaint, how few are there, whom indolence, imprudence, and want of all manliness, do not pronounce to be as unworthy, as they are incapable of blessing? — You are poor, you are destitute of the conveniences, perhaps of the necessities of life; and you bewail it as if it were your lot, and almost accuse God and man. Look at your wealthier neighbour, and you will find, that he rose not into opulence by extravagance, which preserves nothing, and by sloth, which acquires nothing. — You are the prey of a distempered body, and all around you are fatigued with your complaints and peevishness: feed not so high; drink not so deep; give not with so liberal a hand to your pampered lusts; humour not some favourite passion which devours your health; practice the poor man's regimen of temperance and useful employment, and the wise man's restorative of exercise, of amusing recreation, of social pleasantries, and you

you may find the blessing for which you envy the very slave of daily toil. — You complain of the insipidity of your enjoyments, of a dullness and disgusting tedium, which pursues you wherever you turn yourselves. Be more temperate in your pleasures, more modest in your expectations, of a more chastised taste, more active and animated in your exertions, more awake to every summons of manly, rational, and useful character; and you will find, perhaps, that enjoyment which now flies you will court you in your path. — You complain of the coldness, the unkindness, the treachery of friends, of the perverseness and ingratitude of children, the infidelity of your dependents, and the being generally neglected and disesteemed by the world: Be wiser in the choice of your friends; be more kind-hearted, and open, and generous in the use of them; live less to yourself, and more to your children, to your dependents, and to the world; and you will meet, perhaps, the generous satisfaction

faction of being well with all around you.
— In fine, in every instance, where the removal of your complaint depends only on the use of fit and lawful means, apply to these means; and charge not providence for the want of a good, which asks only your efforts to be yours; or with an evil from which common wisdom and activity may relieve you. — Whether religion enter into the mind or not, this summons, to befriend ourselves, is the summons of wisdom; for the unbeliever disowns all miracles, and the religious man expects them not in the ordinary course of human agency. But you expect, forsooth, that the whole course of nature, and the laws of the moral world should be reversed, in compliment to your follies and vices; you expect wealth, without activity or œconomy; health, without temperance, or air, or exercise; friends, without forbearance, frankness, or good humour; children, without kindness or gentleness; dependents, without one liberal or generous action; and esteem, without one quality to
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be revered or trusted. Deserve a better fate, or shew at least the manliness of bearing with more temper the ill fate you have so well deserved; or shew the only wisdom which is now left you, the wisdom of correction and amendment. I wish the world were rid of all the discontent which springs out of this single source; it would be a more prudent, a more active, a more temperate, a more good-humoured, affectionate, and generous world; the complaints of life would be reduced to a much narrower compass, and be of that nature which are more easily borne, and fall on those who are fitted to bear them with temper, decency, and fortitude.

But, as it is allowed that the best conduct cannot always secure success; that, even in the things which are ordinarily within the reach of human agency, a disappointment may ensue; and that there are trials and distresses to which all human means of prevention are inapplicable; it is wisdom, and manliness, and christia-

nity, to bear up with fortitude against the fate which we cannot remedy, which is always rendered worse by ill-temper and fretfulness, and which, though not removed, is yet alleviated, by placid humility and decent submission. Truly, it is a grievous thing, that we cannot work miracles or impossibilities; it is much to be lamented, that the discontented and distempered mind cannot recal the wealth which is dispersed, the health and strength which are worn away, the friends or children which are numbered with the dead, or any blessing which is gone the usual course of all terrestrial enjoyments. There is an obstinacy in the discontent of some, which scorns all sober advice; they have a perverse and sullen joy in being their own tormentors: but the irremediableness of any misfortune should always be considered as the voice of God, which summons us to submission. Where human means end, resignation to heaven begins; nor is this the stoical apathy; it is fortitude, with all the sense of
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the evil; it is piety, where the hand of God is visible.

The want of piety or of submission to the providence of God, to that wisdom which it is horrid to doubt of, to that goodness which it is foolish and wicked to question, is one great inlet of unsatisfied desires; it is the abandoning that rock, on which we are to stand amidst all the changes and trials of human life. It is therefore a sound and wholesome advice, to bid the discontented turn themselves to God; to reflect upon his wise, his all-sustaining, and all-benevolent government, and where neither personal crime has produced, nor personal virtue can remove the suffering, to refer the subject of their uneasiness to his superior disposal. Nothing can strike petulance and passion with such awe and shame, as the presence of God; as the introducing to our view that venerable Being, whose providence we arraign by our unseemly and ungrateful repinings. What! the creature prescribe to his Creator; a poor weak

short-sighted mortal dictate to the Governor of ten thousand thousand worlds; the candidate for eternity quarrel with the trial of his fitness for eternal blessedness; with the means which the God of all mercy has chosen for correcting his follies, subduing his vices, bringing forward his virtues, and fitting him for heaven! These are questions which we can never too seriously nor too frequently propose to our minds, if we wish to rise with a noble ascendancy above the poor disgusts of common minds; if we wish to pass through life with a manly steadiness, and be always in a posture to improve the dispensations of providence to the health of our immortal souls.

The Stoics subdued, or boasted to have subdued, every other passion of the human mind, by sacrificing all of them to pride; and, under the influence of this master-passion, had brought themselves to deny, that there was such a thing as evil in the world; or, that any thing could shake the constancy, could lessen the happiness of such high spirits

spirits as theirs. Christianity, in a different view, teaches almost the same doctrine; but then, it is evil and unhappiness only in the general issue, which it denies. The trial of a Christian, the patience and fortitude to which he is summoned in the Gospel, the example of his master as a lesson of submission, suppose difficulties and evils in our present state, which human nature is designed to feel. But, it is a glorious faith, that there is no ultimate evil to persevering piety and virtue; and from this faith springs the mild tempered complacency of resignation. — Yet so far as there is any thing of manliness in the Stoic, imitate even this high-tempered heathen. Reason as well as religion recommend this conduct; for, whether willingly or not, we must endure our fate; and it is better to bend than to break, to accommodate our minds to what we cannot alter, than, to the ruin of some external comforts, to add the ruin of our tempers, and reject with indignancy the comforts that are left. Though the desire

after the departed blessing cannot be wholly obliterated, it may be much weakened by admitting the absurdity of giving way to it; and the disposing the mind to submission may prevent those prurient and unappeased wishes, which answer no other end than to haunt our tortured imagination with the constant spectre of what is no more. However old the advice, that what cannot be remedied is lightened by patience, there is much good sense in it; it is at least a palliative; it has its foundation in human nature; it is applicable to the worst condition of human life, and may so far compose the mind as that it shall admit more generous and virtuous consolation.

It would be well, also, if many of the sons of discontent, who with an envious eye contemplate the great and rich, and, in their restless ardour to be like them, hardly seem to know that they have a God, a fellow-creature, or one other interest in the world; it would be well if they would consider, whether happiness be so inseparably connected with greatness and with wealth as they

they appear to imagine. It may be, that the happiness in view springs not out of the possession, but out of the mind of the possessor; that, with this mind, every condition of life would be a blessing; that, without this mind, the more elevated the station, the farther would it lead from happiness; that this equality of mind, which can extract the good out of every state, is naturally irreconcilable with a restless and unappeased longing after any condition; and that this is the true reason why the ardent combatants for power and riches are hardly ever found in the walks of peace, enjoyment, and of true happiness. Before, therefore, you fix your eye on these dangerous acquisitions, examine well your minds and estimate your strength, or rather let them not fasten on your hearts at all. Be at ease in your pursuit of them, cheerful in the use of them, and, in every varying condition of your life, let them be subservient to all the gratifications of a friendly, liberal, and virtuous spirit. If you find not, every moment, a heart to taste good, and a heart to do good, you are not

fitted for wealth and power, nor wealth and power fitted for you; success will be your punishment, and disappointment the greatest mercy which heaven can provide for you. You believe not these harsh forebodings! Why, truly a rational belief is not the province of the multitude: but this I know, that you ought to believe them, and that the constant unvaried history of human life ought to teach you the law of human nature. With an unprepared, undisciplined, and immoral mind, the history of wealth and power is little other than the history of its foolish, but wretched victims; while he who has wisdom, self-government and virtue and piety, finds, in the bosom of obscurity and poverty, a content and cheerfulness and happiness, which the greatest and the richest but rarely experience.

Various are the lessons which may still farther be given, in order to the correction of an unsatisfied and discontented mind; and any one of them, if faithfully applied, would be sufficient to effect the cure. A conviction

conviction of its meanness, its being as much beneath the man as the christian, the persuasion of a wise and fatherly providence which superintends us all, the dependence on a better world, in fine, all the generous comforts of a pure religion, are well fitted to destroy this inward tormentor; and no mind, which is not aided and fortified by these principles, will ever make effectual head against it. But neither reason nor religion directly enter into the combat; they preserve and guard that mind alone, which knows itself, and is at peace with itself; but, as the turbulent and disorderly passions are the support of discontent, these must be removed before either reason or religion will deign to smile upon us.

Discontent, in all the degrees of it, is the consequence of our abandoning ourselves to some or all of our passions. Of these passions I would speak respectfully, as I revere the wise Being who furnished them: But, assuredly, they were never designed by
God

God to govern man. If they may be allied to every virtue of the soul, they are yet oftner found connected with our most dangerous and ruinous vices. — In those creatures of a lower order, in whom passion presides; as a sensual pleasure is the whole or the chief of their happiness, God has wisely, in their very constitution, fixed the limits of passion, beyond which it is not suffered to pass; and therefore it robs them not of the happiness they are intended for. The animal, which grazes in the field, enjoys its pasture with a full content; and, when satiety leads to playfulness or sleep, no fretfulness, or care, or lust of hoarding, or envy, or pride, robs it of its mirth or rest. — What instinct does for the brute, reason and a moral principle were designed to do in a more generous way for man; by instructing him, that all the excesses of passion are ruinous to his character and to his peace; that even its very indulgences are in themselves mean and unsatisfying, nor worthy therefore to have any considerable place in his

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his regard. When gratified to the utmost, they leave a palling and a dullness, which ought to tell him, that his proper happiness is not there: they not only desert him in the moment when he most eagerly courts them, but the pursuit leads him far from his true friends, from the satisfaction of a calm and chearful mind, the sweet intercourse of good-tempered and benevolent society, the conversation with his God, and the superior delights which spring out of the hopes of a purer and better world. —

These are truths founded in our natures, verified by experience, and which the slave of passion makes the most melancholy confession of; but which the habit of indulgence, and that feebleness to which indulgence reduces him, will not suffer him to conform to. These infatuated men are no strangers to the nobler dictates of reason and religion; they allow their superior worth; but, while they are really destroying all the work of reason and religion in their souls, and to the last hour of life
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giving to other things the ascendancy in their hearts, they will yet hope to be transplanted to a world where reason and piety reign, though they have not one requisite, not one preparative, for such a world.

It is not therefore a speculative conviction of the higher truths, which reason and religion speak with so authoritative a voice to man, that can effect their cure; they must themselves destroy the enemy within them, before they can find their friends in all their virtuous and generous comfort. They must root out that low taste in themselves, which will not suffer them to lift their eye up to nobler objects. They must be able in every moment to say, my happiness is not here, and therefore not abandon their souls to it. Moderation and temperance are admirable lessons; but they are so undefinable in their extent, so difficult to be ascertained in every case where they begin and where they end, that, admirable lessons as they are, they generally lose of their effect, by the mistakes which men of passion

passion and sense so easily make in applying them to their particular situation and circumstances. The one thing is to know, to feel, to be continually governed and actuated by, this immoveable conviction; that passion and sense, in all their application to man, are not the best character of his soul, nor the best source of his happiness; and that, whenever they vex and ruffle him, whenever disappointment sits with an oppressive weight upon his spirits, whenever envy, anger, pride and covetousness, are stimulated by denial, when the care of to-morrow corrodes the enjoyment of to-day, when his fretfulness changes the face of nature, and neither his friend, his family, nor his God, nor a future world, are the same to him; he may then be sure, that excess has awfully commenced within him; that all depends upon that moment; upon one manly exertion; upon throwing off, with a virtuous indignation, the slavery of such debasing corrupting influence. This effort must be made, or he is abandoned to a
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worldly spirit; and, as he has poorly sunk his reason and his christianity to the taste and to the pursuits of a brute, with no better and more elevated mind than what a brute almost may own, must he go into the future world of God, to receive, from that righteous and moral Judge, the appointment which is suited to the character that he brings into his presence.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

TIETY ESSENTIAL TO A GOOD CHARACTER.

I TIM. IV. 7.

— *Exercise thyself unto Godliness.*

SUCH is St. Paul's advice to Timothy, as highly necessary to his sustaining the character of a preacher of righteousness, and a successor in the ministry of Jesus Christ. But the advice is not confined to any particular walk in life; it equally addresses itself to all, and equally deserves to be inculcated upon all men. Accordingly, it is my intention to recommend it as a general duty, springing out of, and perfective of, virtue.

Godliness, in the most strict and appropriate sense of the word, is that especial
branch

branch of religion which respects God, or has him more immediately for its object.

It is sometimes, indeed, taken in a larger acceptation, comprehending the whole temper and behaviour of a christian. But here, I presume, its precise import is piety, or such a disposition towards God as leads to all due observance of him: and a due observance of God, as small a part of our duty as it may be thought by some to imply, and as little as it may by still more be attended to, is not only a duty, but the most valuable part of all duty; that which gives a grace, a dignity and steadiness, to the whole virtuous character.

And to exercise ourselves unto godliness imports such attention to the various offices of it, and such a stated, habitual and earnest application of ourselves to the performance of them, as naturally tends to raise and keep alive the noble temper of piety in our minds, and give it a regular commanding influence over our lives. It is the advice therefore of St. Paul to Timothy,

thy, to apply himself with sincerity and diligence to the study of piety, to acquire the spirit of it, and habituate himself in the exercise of it. But, wherein this exercise consists, I leave out of my view; the wisdom and excellence of the acquisition itself is all my present concern.

In the recommendation of piety, many urgent reasons, many persuasive incitements, might be presented to you; of which I shall content myself with intreating your attention to the following.

A creature, endowed with reason, resembling and related to God, as man is, must, if he know God, appear to be a very monster, without piety to him. He violates the laws of his nature, the implanted principles of his constitution. He stifles some of the strongest suggestions, the most interesting and pleasing sentiments of his heart. Man is not only capable of knowing God in all the relations which he stands in to him; but the finger of his Creator leads to the knowledge of him; and, in consequence

sequence of this knowledge, he must perceive the reasonableness of all that good temper and behaviour in which piety is comprehended. He must see, that, where the greatest excellence is, there the highest respects are due; and that to him, to whom he is the most obliged, and on whom he is the most dependent, he owes the highest gratitude and reverence. If he fail to act agreeably to these eternal truths, he counteracts the best character of mind, and is a contradiction to the noblest part of himself.

In being rational and moral creatures, all rational and moral character is expected from us. And what can be more worthy of reason, or in a moral view more becoming, than that creatures constituted and related to God as we are, should cultivate every moral temper towards him; should honour and reverence him as the greatest; submit ourselves to him as the wisest; adore, love, and imitate him, as the best of beings? Now this is piety. Say, then, whether

ther it be not a lovely temper, and most reasonable service; whether this natural and apparent fitness of it should not recommend it to every rational and moral creature of God; whether the consideration of it, as the proper debt of man, should not cover every one with shame, who has been at no pains to cultivate it in his mind, or who, to make way for other guests, has even studied to estrange himself from God.

This argument addresses itself to all; to the disciples of nature as well as of revelation. But it deserves the serious attention of the latter, that the precepts and examples of Scripture expressly hold it forth as the first of duties. Revelation, conformably to the light of nature, which it was designed not to extinguish but to revive, maintains an inseparable union between the rights of God and man. As it requires the exercise of a conscience void of offence towards our fellow-creature, so towards our Creator also. When it enjoins the love of our neighbour, it observes the proper order

of duty, in inculcating first the love of God, who is the first and best of beings. This it esteems to be the first and great commandment; the first, in respect of the dignity of the object; and the great commandment, as it is the richest source and surest foundation of every acceptable service we have to perform. We owe much to our religion, in that it has taught us to live soberly and righteously; but we should remember, that it enjoins us also to live godly in this present world. The duties of temperance, of justice, and of charity, certainly fit well upon a christian; but they are not thoroughly of a christian cast, when they are not aided and supported by a sense of God, a reverence for his authority, a love of his paternal character, and when they have no reference to his glory.

The character of a christian is therefore miserably incomplete if it be destitute of piety; if piety be not the predominant and actuating principle. To bring us to the knowledge, to the love, and to the imitation

imitation of the true God, is the distinguishing service which christianity has done for us ; this is our separation from the unenlightened heathen ; and to represent God so as to invite our affection, is the great distinction of the mild tidings of the Gospel from the awful law of mount Sinai. It is therefore an uncontested fact, and which deserves seriously to be weighed by us, that, in whatever degree a professor of the Gospel is deficient in this blessed temper, he so far falls short of true and proper christianity, he has not yet possessed the peculiar distinction and glory of a christian. Though the morality of the New Testament be infinitely more perfect and lovely than what any nation ever before attained to, yet we are struck with the approach which some great and good men among the heathens have made to all that is virtuous in self-command, in justice and beneficence towards man ; but not the best and wisest of them all made any approach to the piety of the Gospel ; because they knew not the

God, whom this Gospel has revealed to us, in all the venerableness and grace of his character.

I hope I am not mistaken in my account of this virtue, in insisting on it as the highest duty, and as the proper mark and distinction of every christian; for, even to promote so good an end, I would not borrow the language of falsehood, nor even of exaggeration. But, if my representation be just, many a one, who calls himself, and, I suppose, thinks himself to be a christian, is sadly mistaken; and sadly falls short of the full character which belongs to a christian. Of all the virtues, which the New Testament enjoins, piety is at the lowest ebb amongst us, and even in the lowest estimation. Where there is the most outward show of it, yet it is mixed with so much of superstition and enthusiasm, with such degrading forbidding sentiments of God, and with so much of an unkind, uncharitable, and immoral spirit towards men; as can hardly suffer one to own it
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for a true offspring of that piety, which Jesus Christ taught and practised. While the more liberal sects amongst us, and from whom better things might be expected, seem as if piety were wearing out of their creed; and, though far from being deficient in their duty towards men, it is a very scanty payment which they make towards God; and, in the payment of this little, they are half reluctant, half ashamed. Their hearts appear not by any means so interested and affected, as in many of their social intercourses and virtuous returns to their fellow-creatures. Some indeed appear to have entertained very strange notions of this duty, and hardly speak of it with a respectful decency: we are sent here, say they, to enjoy the good things which God has given us, with chearfulness but innocence; and in consistence with our own comfort, to be agreeable, useful, and beneficent to our fellow-creature: so that if we take but care to be good men, as the word is generally understood, it need be no

doubt with us that we are thoroughly good christians ; the eye of God, they add, is continually upon us, and if we use his gifts well, to our own and to our fellows' benefit, this is the best gratitude ; nor can it be of any importance to be coming into his presence with the formal tribute of thanks, as if so munificent a Creator were not abundantly pleased with seeing the best end of his bounty promoted in us.

These maxims sound well in many an ear, and have rid many of that little piety which has still been left them. But there are many sad deceptions in this representation ; and it is much to be feared, that they, who hold this language, talk more highly of their other virtues than either modesty or truth will countenance ; in order to atone for the absence of a virtue, to which they have no liking, or to which some other strong attachments that piety kindly mixes not with, have made them utterly averse. The greatest and most fatal deception in the whole is this ; that they
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come into the world of God only to live pleasantly themselves, and to promote, in the mean while, the pleasure of others, by observing the maxims of justice and beneficence. But it is the sober truth both of reason and revelation, that this world is much more a state of moral probation, than of pleasurable enjoyment; that the great end, for which a God of all holiness made and sent them into this world, was, to bear his image and to improve it; and that their proper happiness should continually spring out of, and be in proportion to, their partaking of the divine nature. They would then know, that the most important and improving object of contemplation, to the moral creature of God, must for ever be the excellent Original in whose likeness they were made; and that piety, independent of its declared acceptableness to God, is at once the perfection and the test, and the continual support, of those virtuous tempers of the soul, from which our progressive happiness must spring. These truths constitute

stitute a very great and necessary addition to the creed of many christians, who appear to be not a little proud of the liberality of their religious sentiments, and of their decent demeanour in the eyes of men; in fine, who boast themselves, as by way of eminence, to be moral christians. Why! gentlemen, as much morality as you please; I hope no friend of the Gospel will ever check you in that career: but take this along with you, and as a truth, in which reason and revelation equally join; that without piety your moral building is a very unfinished one; that it can hardly at all be called a christian building; that it wants that one virtue, which is the animating soul of and security for all the rest; and that without piety, your morality, imperfect as it is, stands upon a very tottering foundation.

To complete the christian, then, piety must ever be added to the account of duty: it is not only necessary to be righteous towards men, we must be righteous also towards

wards our Maker; since there are duties and obligations arising from the relation subsisting between God and us, as well as from those subsisting between man and man. But you farther plead, that you can benefit your fellow-creature, while no act of yours can benefit your Creator. Be it so! But, if the benefiting your fellow-creature had been all the object of the God who made you, in instilling into your breast a kind affection towards him, he could abundantly have blessed that creature with health and wealth without your aid, without leaving him dependent upon your goodness. It was your own happiness which God had in view, in giving you the seeds of all virtuous affection, and presenting a fellow-creature as the object of it; the temper itself, not the quantity of the good done, is the thing which attracts all the complacency of God, and which will be rewarded with all his beneficence; otherwise, unhappy is the lot of many a friendly, candid, and generous mind, amongst the
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sons of obscurity and poverty. All the blessings which you can confer upon a fellow-creature, all the addition which you can make to the comfort of society, is put into your hands by your Creator; and he has left you dependent upon each other, in order to feed the temper, by furnishing a field for the exercise of all human piety. This is the great end of a moral providence; and, if the temper be all, it still more exalts and more improves you, to cultivate it towards God; who is the best, the noblest, the most endeared object of it; and towards whom, if you but disposed and habituated yourselves to entertain it in all its purity and all its strength, you could not be deficient in any disposition, or any act in which it is required to appear towards a fellow-creature. To fulfil, therefore, the debt of piety to man, and neglect the higher piety, which God made us equally to entertain towards him, is but to be religious in part; is but to have laid the first stone in the building of a perfect and complete

plete morality; it is to fail in the most essential branch of it, in that which is directed to its highest and worthiest object; in that which is necessary to give life, spirit, dignity, and stability to all the rest; in fine, in that which is the very distinction, the prominent feature of a christian.

To this every page of the New Testament, every precept almost of our divine Master, bears witness. But how beautifully is the spirit of the christian precepts illustrated by the example of Christ; in which, if either friend or enemy were to distinguish the predominant trait of his character, he could not avoid the notice of his piety, as by far the most conspicuous and governing principle of his mind. Not that any virtue, which belongs to a moral being, which carries either grace or grandeur with it, did not enter into his character, but each stood in its proper place and degree; while piety, which has appeared to be the first, and the sum, as it were, of all our other virtues, reigned supreme,

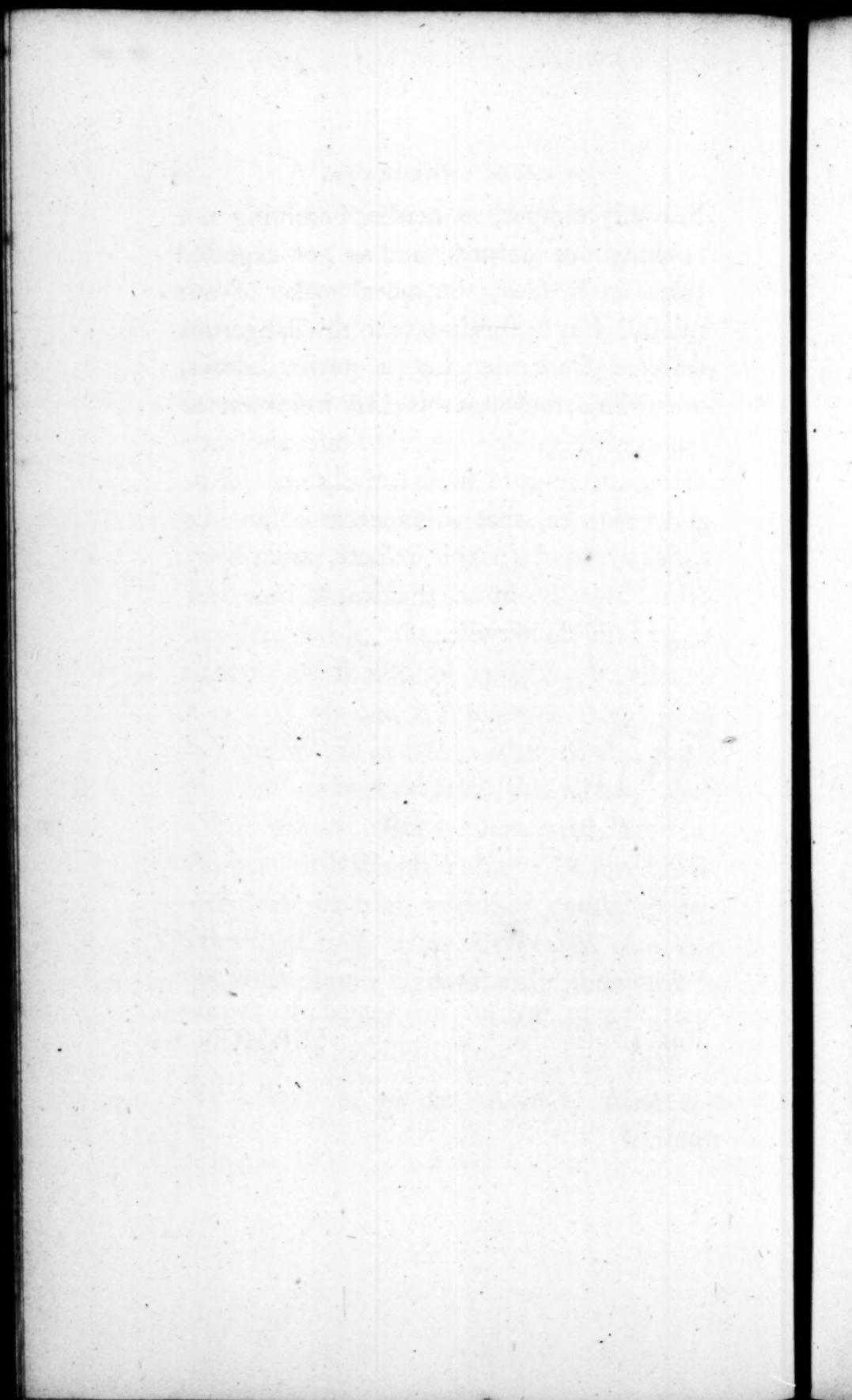
preme, and gave its complexion to every good affection of his soul. In God he found his highest gratification, in God every incitement to what is great and good; God was all in all with him; nor in the history of men do we meet with any one, who with so much calmness, chearfulness, and uniformity, appeared to have God so entirely in his thoughts; not as the indolent, but the moral possessor of his mind; none who ever manifested a heart so entirely disposed to please, to honour, to converse with and delight in him. He knew his Father's will, and it may be said, from his own confession, that his own will was resolved into it. The piety of Jesus Christ was no habit of bodily address; no showy and affected language of his tongue; not appearing only in certain periodical acts of devotion; but was a prevailing temper of mind, which was continually present to him, and displayed itself equally and constantly throughout the whole of his behaviour and conversation. He had wrought
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into his soul an inviolable regard and attachment to God, as to his sovereign, his father, and his friend. He had no occasion on particular returning intervals, to wake in his mind the remembrance of this great and good Being; to recognise the obligations of duty, reverence, and affection, which he owed to him; these were never absent from his thoughts; every movement of his heart, and every act of his life, seem to be referred to, and actuated by this one principle. To do the will of him that sent him, to conform himself to his appointments, to fulfil the purposes of his wise and kind providence, was his first, his last concern; the one thing which occupied his thoughts, which inspired his views, which dictated his conduct, which on every occasion ministered the most enlivening support, and the most virtuous pleasure.

Every one, therefore, who would be thought to be his follower, must be convinced, that piety is not only essential to, but that it is the proper, the commanding,
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the actuating virtue of a christian. While the precepts and example of Christ stand recorded in the pages of the New Testament, it can never, with any good face be pleaded, that piety is an unnecessary attainment of his disciple; that he signified no lesson therein to those who call themselves by his name, who make a profession of his religion, who acknowledge him as their Lord, their teacher and pattern; that it was not his wish, his virtuous and benevolent wish, that in this truly moral temper we should be careful to resemble him. If any one in the form of man, from the perfection of every other virtue, could plead an exemption from this virtue, Jesus Christ might. But he honoured, he worshipped his heavenly Father; he loved him, delighted in him, regularly consulted and conversed with him; he praised him and prayed to him; he constantly abounded in all the affections and expressions of a sublime and ardent devotion. And shall it be left to us to be estranged from this heavenly

heavenly temper, as neither becoming nor exalting our natures, and as not expected from us by God, the moral maker of our minds? Far be this immoral, this dangerous delusion from us. Let us rather address our whole souls to this best imitation of our perfect guide; let it be our care, our ambition, to put Christ entirely on; let us give diligence, that as much as possible of the same mind (in this respect, as in every other) may be in us, that was in him; let us go, and do likewise.



S E R M O N I V .

THAT PIETY IS FOUNDED IN HUMAN
NATURE.

DEUT. IV. 29.

*If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy
God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him
with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.*

WHETHER Moses, in this exhortation to the people over whom he presided as a civil, religious, and moral governor, intended to recommend the general temper of piety, or only a conformity to the ordinances of a religious nature which he had established, is of no importance to my present subject to enquire into. Though it be but an illiberal and uncandid construction to suppose the latter, yet my intention is not to become the ad-

vocate of Moses, but of piety; and therefore to understand this exhortation, as an invitation to all to seek and cultivate the noblest temper which our minds are capable of receiving; from this encouraging assurance, that the sincere and affectionate pursuit will be rewarded with success. If piety be so excellent a thing, so essential to a good character, as the preceding discourse has endeavoured to prove it; it were much to be lamented, if it be one of those sublime attainments which lie not within the reach of all men; and which either from a defect in human nature, or the character of human life, is more to be desired than hoped for. The most dangerous weakness of fallible men is to magnify their own weakness, and excuse their inattention to virtues of a higher order, by submitting their minds to a low and degraded standard of human capacity. That piety is to be acquired, one would think could hardly be doubted by any one, who has used the least endeavour to acquire a just idea of God and of human

human nature; who has at all considered the character of the great object of piety; and how this character corresponds to the best frame and disposition of the human mind. Human life also, however melancholy a sentence we may often be disposed to pass upon it, is not without examples of success in this laudable pursuit, sufficient to encourage those who are sincerely desirous of treading in their steps, and of reaching the same glorious end of their pursuit. Assuredly the moral culture of our minds, the using every means to inform ourselves of God, presenting every motive which may excite a strong desire of soul towards him, together with the habit of corresponding with him, in fine, the addressing ourselves to all the means which are naturally fitted to promote a friendship between God and us, cannot fail of the desired end.

Let this question, therefore, between God and man, be brought fairly to issue.

If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him; if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy strength. A very distinguished ancient has observed, that, in order to the becoming a proficient in any art or science, it is necessary that there should be discovered a strong affection of mind towards it, and that this symptom will generally assure success; because he supposes, that it is never found without a capacity fitted to the attainment. In this then, as in every other pursuit, it is necessary that there be a desire towards piety; that the mind discover a wish to be possessed of it; that it be sensible of the want it; in fine, that it feel that previous will, which must precede every movement of man towards any object. Unless there be a sense of something desirable in the acquisition of piety, it is not to be expected that we should put ourselves in the way to attain it. In the human constitution, desire is the great spring of action; it is that which gives motion to all our powers; and this motion,
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or activity, will always be more or less uniform and animated, according to the real or supposed value of the thing desired, and the degree of propensity with which the heart is carried out towards it. So far human nature is uniform, and all the difference in human character and conduct arises from the different estimation in which things are held by men. If their desires were directed to the same objects and in the same degree, no other difference would be found than what springs from a difference of natural or acquired abilities. But their desires are as various as their powers; and hence the great diversity which takes place amongst men: hence the eagerness and industry with which some pursue riches; others, the proud flatteries of greatness and of state; others, the allurements of pleasure; others, the specious distinctions of speculative wisdom; and, others, a thousand other objects. If the same ideas of supreme importance and utility were but annexed to piety as to these seducing ob-

jects of our affections, the desires of men would be carried as strongly towards it ; they would exert themselves as strenuously in the pursuit of it ; and we should behold a world of saints, (you smile perhaps contemptuously at the term, but it is the want of a sincere and generous piety which alone dishonours it, for, in itself, it includes every thing that is graceful to human nature;) I say, a world of saints, instead of a disordered croud of bustling and unsatisfied combatants for power or wealth, of low-minded debauchees, of the victims of a pampered luxury, or of the deluded and often useless sons of inactive science.

But, alas! the stream of human desire runs with but a slow and feeble current towards piety, and in the multitude is hardly at all perceived, till a satiety of other gratifications has taken place. The temper of devotion, in the active season of life, is seldom viewed in so advantageous a light as to raise it very high in their estimation ; or of consequence to put them on any very animated

animated endeavours to acquire it. Many have no sense of its importance at all; it crosses not their thoughts, and therefore they are under no concern about the want of it. Others know it only to decry it; to represent it as a low plebeian virtue, fit only for the dull, phlegmatic, and joyless soul; while others, to an indecent and ignorant ridicule of it, add, as a farther justification of themselves and the annihilation of all obligation to it, that it is a disposition of mind wholly constitutional, dispensed to some and denied to others; and, like the other diversities of temper, taste, and genius, designed, by the wise Author of man, to exhibit a not unpleasing variety in life. Others, again, to serve an end, either as to this life or another, have it only on their tongues, or put it on as their dress, without any concurrent affection of soul. Is it to be expected, then, that such dispositions as these should ever lead to piety; while, instead of those desires, which are the previous and absolute requisite to it, there

there are found the strongest prejudices against it, or an utter insensibility of mind towards it?

What then can be done for the cure of so distempered, and if religion be not all a fable, so deplorable a state of mind? What to allure them to piety? — It is said, that they must desire it; that this is essentially requisite to every motion of the man towards it. But desire supposes some sense of the excellence and suitableness of the thing desired; while, with the persons we are contending with, it is supposed that they have no such sense. Shall we refer them to the first elements of religion, there to learn the God, of whom they seem to be so miserably ignorant; to acquire a faith in him, and contemplate the relations in which they stand to him; the vast interest which they have in him; the undescribable comfort of viewing him as their friend; the wise direction, which a constantly present sense of him gives to the whole conduct; the calm and temperate rule of disorderly, deceitful,

deceitful, and tormenting passions, to which it leads; the decent, lovely, and useful virtues, which it inspires; the steadiness and magnanimity of soul which it teaches us; and thus acquire a full knowledge and deep conviction of the excellence and importance of piety? Shall we direct them to this previous conversation, in order to supply the defect which piety complains of in them? Assuredly it is a fit and pertinent direction; and they, who are without this knowledge, may well be without the desire; or, if somehow possessed of a propensity towards piety, are yet in no small danger of mistaking the object of their pursuit; and, in spite of all their ardent longings, may never experience the temper in all its truth, and grace, and blessedness. —But this assistance is every day and hour administered; and, to many, repeated instruction would convey no new information and work no change. It is more to the purpose to inform them, that of the many, who are devoid of piety
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and plead their want of relish for it, and their having no such feeling of its excellence and importance as to stir up within them a desire of soul towards it; it is of more use, I say, to inform them, that in all this they speak not the truth; and that as there is no defect of knowledge, so neither is there of a natural disposition from which the desire may be expected to spring; and which argues a perfect fitness for the attainment. This may seem to be a bold assertion; but I will rest the issue of the whole cause on their own ingenuous confession.

You say, that piety is a thing strange and unnatural to you; that you have no inclination of soul towards it. I presume, that, as you use this plea, you know the meaning of the very terms in which you express it, and need not to have piety defined to you. I will remind you, however, in a few words, of its plain and full import. It means an affection of mind to the best and worthiest

worthiest Being in nature; a grateful movement towards the kindest Friend; a trust in his wise and kind protection, in his wise and paternal government; a reverence of his will, a desire of his esteem, and an humble expectation of that happiness which attends his favour. Will you say now, that you know not God under this respectable and amiable character; or, knowing him, that your minds are so strangely fashioned, or so miserably corrupted, as that you have no veneration, no love, no gratitude, no moral attraction towards such a character? This is a dreadful confession; and, I presume, too degrading to be admitted by the least moral amongst you. But I will search you a little closer, and, not only from a sense of shame, but from your own conduct, extort the condemnation of your plea; not from any pleasure in urging you to this necessity, but because self-condemnation must precede amendment; and that you may better know yourselves,

yourself, and where the real impediment to a pious temper lies.

If then, acknowledging God under this venerable and engaging character, you still say, that you have no affection of mind towards him; this defect in the temper and frame of your minds must appear also in all similar instances, and towards all other beings who resemble God, either in character, or in the relations in which you stand to him. Have you then no discernment of moral worth, of the grandeur and beauty of character in all the exhibitions of it, which are to be found amongst your own kind, in your intercourse with your fellow-creatures? Will you, dare you, own such a depravation of the essential principles of your constitution; dare you so load yourselves with guilt, and stand forth the refuse and disgrace of your species? But, if you could be so lost as to make this confession, it would not therefore be true or credible. The work of God, in its lowest degradation, is not so utterly stript of all
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moral feeling; and, if those moral tempers, which no state of vice can wholly eradicate, have not their natural influence, nor give their direction to the conduct; it is owing to the same cause which leads the mind astray from God, and obstructs the benign ascendency of piety in your minds.—Let me ask you then, does allegiance to the sovereign power of your state appear in no respectable light to you? In all the experience of the obliging offices of social life, have you never felt a grateful emotion towards your kind benefactor; and, never wished in any degree to return his kindness? Or, to comprehend all the relations of human life in one; have you never felt and applauded, never confessed how fit and beautiful a thing it is, to remember the protection, the forbearance, the tenderness, the munificence of a parent, in the decent returns of filial reverence, love, and gratitude, and duty? I ask you not how, in some condemned instances, or even in the general tenor of your conduct, you have acted;

acted; but, how in the still hour of reflection, in the severe retrospect of conduct, you have felt; how these things have appeared to the moral judge within? Whether, from the very make and frame of your minds, you do not perceive a fitness, a loveliness therein; whether you do not, in spite of all the perversions of misbehaviour, for ever approve and commend them? But, still more to strengthen this conviction, are not the contrary characters universally acknowledged to be infamous and detestable? Personate the sovereign, and can you justify the violation of all the ties which bind the subject to him? Present yourself as a generous friend, and can you look with complacency on the wretch, in whom all his kindness stirs not one grateful feeling, and whom it persuades not to one generous return? Be but in thought a father, and you are shocked at the monster who turns upon the hand that protected and blessed him.

And what does all this prove, but that every one of you are, by the constitution
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which God has given you, disposed to all the affections which enter into that piety, which you conceive to be so strange and unnatural to you. Piety to your sovereign, to your benefactor, to your friend, to your parent, has all your approbation; and him who is a rebel to these strong endearing ties, every one abhors. Are you then disposed and inclined to this temper, in all the invitations to it between man and man; and do you say, that you have no aptitude of mind towards it; that it is not your constitutional temper, and that you cannot attain that sense of its excellence and importance as to interest you in its exercise? No! the defect is of another nature; and, in the mind of every man, God has laid the foundation, and a sufficient foundation, on which a generous and acceptable piety may be raised. Nor is God less the object of that very piety, which, in a greater or a less degree, we all admire and practise in our intercourse with man; because every character, every relation,

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which piety respects, is more distinguished in him, and without any of the mixture of human imperfection. The mind of every man is formed to piety; and it is only required that we turn to God, as to a sovereign, a father, a friend, a benefactor, and the same movements will discover themselves; and we shall find by immediate experience, that this temper, which includes every virtuous affection of the soul, has nothing strange and unnatural in it.

The indisposition of the mind to piety, or its not being our constitutional temper, is therefore never the true reason why we are strangers to it; and, whenever this plea is urged, it is only to be considered as one of the many instances, in which we are ingenious to impose upon ourselves and hide from our view the full infamy of our conduct. To throw our faults upon our Maker, to find our defects in that constitution which he has given us, is the easy resource of many a sinner, and by which, in one bold assumption, he stills the tumult of

of a disordered mind. But, however we may be ready enough to plead a natural disinclination, in order to account for our want of piety to God, we are by no means so ready to acknowledge the same character in our relations to man; as this would be to exhibit ourselves as the very outcasts of the human species. While our undoubted experience of what passes within ourselves, and many decided instances of our conduct, clearly prove, that this virtue, with all its amiable and blessed affections, is deeply wrought into the constitution of our minds; the worst and most immoral of men may, if they please to set themselves about the work, find a foundation and materials with which to raise the beautiful building of piety both to God and man.

It is not that the heart is naturally disinclined to God, but that it cannot at the same time pursue its inclination to God and to other indulgences, which are either in their nature or in their excess at enmity with God. Hence arises all the supposed

disinclination, or the supposed inaptness to this noble temper; and he, who will try to rid his mind of the bondage of viler passions and viler habits, and turn himself towards his God, will find that piety is welcome to his soul. To undo, therefore, is in most instances, the great work which is wanting, in order to the introduction of piety as the inspirer of our hearts, and the director of our lives. It is no excuse that envy, avarice, ambition, and lust, lead us to detraction, injustice, oppression, and inhumanity; they drag us not as by a necessity of nature to their abhorred indulgences; they are, through the favour of that Being who formed our hearts, as detested in our own eye as of man and of God. Piety has the same foundation in human nature with every other virtue; it is of the same character and spirit with those virtuous affections which we all acknowledge, which we all admire, which we all revere; it is in us, if we will look for it; it may be brought forward, if we will cherish it; and
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it may be weakened, it may be resisted, it may be destroyed, if we will abandon ourselves to those passions and to those temptations which constitute our trial, both as we are related to our Creator and to our fellow-creatures. To sin against piety is the very same crime as to sin against gratitude or love in any of their forms; and, as man admits not, in the sins against man, the false and profligate plea, that we are by nature indisposed to virtue and to goodness, so neither is it to be presumed, that God will remit the crimes against religion, because we are pleased to suppose that we have no inclination to her demands, or no capacity of entering into her spirit.

Away then with the notion, that a disposition to piety is not the common gift of God to the whole human kind; and that it is the singular property of some minds only, which are cast in a mould that is fitted to receive the impression. Many of the enemies of religion have, either ignorantly or wilfully, adopted this convenient doctrine;

and many others, who formally acknowledge the wisdom and importance of religion, vindicate their individual neglect and inattention to the religious culture of their minds, from this supposed difference in the very frame and temper of them; and many again, through a real ignorance of the true character of piety, and of the equal liberality of the moral Maker of them all, are discouraged and diverted from attempting what they fear to be impracticable. One source of the mistake, in all, is the judging of piety from particular exhibitions of it; for, it may be equally sincere, equally possessing the heart, and equally acceptable to God, though appearing under different forms. As, in friendliness and humanity, some may be gentle and calm, others warm and animated, and yet the heart of each be equally true and good, so the truth of our piety is to be decided, not from the form, but from the response of the heart; from the true and virtuous affection which we bear to God; from the habits and the pleasure of our intercourse

tercourse with him; from the summoning him to our view in all the higher interests of our lives; and from the bearing and doing every thing with a reverence to him.

This is piety in all its truth and in all its acceptableness, however it may assume a specific form or colour from the natural gentleness or warmth of our tempers. And this piety is attainable by all; it is deposited in the breast of every one of us; and we shall find it there, if we will seek it with all our heart and with all our soul: for, it is only the carrying those affections, which every one of us feel in the various relations of human life, up to God, who is the noblest and worthiest object of them. If there be a human being, who is naturally indisposed to religious piety, he is and must be, from the same nature, indisposed to every generous sentiment, and to every debt that he owes to a fellow-creature, in the most interesting relations in which he can stand to him. Before any one, therefore, reprobates piety as the singular endowment of a

peculiar cast of mind, or boldly ventures on this ground to excuse his own conduct, he would do well to consider, whether he be equally willing to acknowledge himself as reprobate to all that is good, as incapable of entering into any of the affections, or practising any of the duties of a good subject, servant, friend, beneficiary, or son. If there be a disposition and a capacity for the one, there is, and must be, by nature, a disposition and a capacity for the other. And, to a mind that means well, it is a most encouraging truth, that piety is within his reach; that the affections, which every good mind delights in, and from which all the sweetness and blessedness of social and domestic life flow, are the very affections which compose this desirable virtue; and that they are these affections alone which religious piety invites us to address to God, in order to be favoured with his continual presence and consolation.

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As I hold piety in the highest estimation, I wish to recollect the view that I have taken of piety, as approved to every one, as congenial with the mind of man, as allied to every virtuous affection, and attainable by every human being. Repetition in this may more or less be unavoidable; but this will give me little concern, if I answer the end of impressing the mind of any one with a deeper conviction of the excellence and importance of piety, and exciting his attention towards it.

The first movement to the possessing ourselves of the spirit of devotion, is a desire towards it, and a sense of the want of it, as of something necessary to the best character of our minds, to the government of our passions, and to the quiet of our souls. If we feel not the want of it, we shall never desire it; and if we have no desire towards it, we shall never dispose ourselves to the pursuit, nor practise any of the means to attain it. Desire must precede every voluntary

tary pursuit, and desire will follow the sense of excellence and importance. — Now it is the argument of this discourse, that from the very frame and constitution of the human mind, nothing more is necessary to the exciting a desire towards piety, than the knowledge and habitual contemplation of God in the relations in which he stands to man. We desire riches, because they are the obvious means to every wordly gratification; we desire a variety of objects, because they appear to minister to our pleasure; we desire honour, fame, dignity, because they are flattering to our vanity and pride; we desire knowledge, because it is the natural food of our intelligence and reason, exalts our natures, leads to eminence among men, and contributes to the most desirable utilities of life. Had we a like feeling of something excellent, noble, and gratifying, in the tempers of virtue and piety, and in all the exercises of them; we should feel a similar desire towards them, and be in like manner impelled to the pursuit

suit of them. — That there is any thing desirable to us in the whole world of God, depends upon the correspondence of the human mind to the object; and that there is a gradation in desire, depends upon a gradation in the sense of excellence and worth. He therefore best answers to the character of human nature, in whom all the desires of a human being are found in their place and degree; and our estimation of him, our praise and dispraise, will and must be regulated thereby. He is not a perfect man, who is destitute of one single sense; in whom we observe not every natural propensity and desire. But as there is an acknowledged scale of dignity and worth in the desires of man, inferior defects are hardly noticed in comparison of defects in those qualities which argue the highest and most exalted state of the human mind. Now to be sensible to moral worth, and to answer to all the claims of duty, gratitude, and love, wherever the character of the object vindicates the claim, is the highest and most

most exalted form of the human mind. We allow it at least in every relation but that of God; and we hardly acknowledge any one as a fellow-man, in whom a propensity of soul towards these virtuous affections, and a character and conduct conformable thereto, are not generally found. We do not in such examples admit the plea of a defect of constitution, and that they are not by nature formed to these virtues. Instead of pitying, we condemn them; we pronounce them without hesitation to be wicked; and we abandon them to odium and to punishment, as having mismanaged, perverted, and corrupted the better nature, which their Creator had given them.—This brings the question immediately home to every man's bosom, who knows and acknowledges a God in all the interesting and endearing relations in which he stands to our race. Either the rule of judgment is wrong, as applied to man, or the rule is right, as applied both to God and man; and the presence or absence of religious piety will

will decide, whether moral worth and moral claims have the ascendancy in the mind or not.

It is to no purpose to plead, that we have no inclination towards God and piety. The question is, how we come to be without this inclination; and whether this be not a fit and proper test of the moral state and temper of our minds? For, whether we have this inclination or not, it is certain, that moral character cannot belong to the man who is without it; it is certain, that the excellence and happiness of the human mind, is not to be attained without it; and that, of all the objects of desire, piety ought the most to be desired, and the most ardently to be pursued. But, if the mind have been deliberately diverted from piety, if our taste have been corrupted in other habits, if other objects have been suffered to engross our affections, and neither God nor piety have been permitted to act upon us with their attractive influence, because not permitted to present themselves; is it
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to be wondered, that we feel no proper inclination towards them ; and that we exert no proper endeavours to possess them ? To correct this unhappy prepossession of the mind, and bring it back to more favourable views of piety and devotion ; I have in this discourse made it my immediate aim to state, that the proper character of devotion is not only consistent with all those tempers of the soul, which are universally acknowledged to be excellent and laudable in all the intercourse between man and man, and without which a human being is confessed to be a very monster of his kind ; but, that devotion is indeed the very perfection of these tempers ; that it is the addressing of every honest, good, and generous affection, to the Being who is supremely worthy of them ; that neither esteem, nor love, nor gratitude, nor loyalty, nor duty, can have a governing influence in that mind, which, knowing God in all the excellence and blessedness of his character, is void of piety and devotion to God.

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Where this desire therefore is still unhappily not found within, and where, though we pursue other objects with avidity, God and a moral intercourse with him stir not our hearts, it is to be presumed, that moral worth itself is not of high estimation with us ; that we regard it not as the highest excellence of a rational mind ; that there are things which we love beyond goodness ; and that only the necessities and the interested relations of life, lead us to practise any of the ways, or entertain any of the affections of love, and gratitude, and duty.

It must be so. The confession is indeed humiliating in the lowest degree to him, who is a stranger to piety ; but this confession he must make. For, let him produce one fellow-creature, whom he thinks he virtuously loves ; one benefactor, to whom he thinks he feels a generous attraction ; one relation in life, to which he thinks he entertains a moral sense of duty ; and then turn his eye on God, and say ; where is the dignified

dignified character, where is the friend, the benefactor, where is the superior, that can stand in competition with this great Being, or claim an equal interest? If his heart be good, and sensible to moral worth wherever moral worth be found, he must revere, esteem, love, and unite himself to God, who stands in the highest relations of moral worth to him. If not, if God have not this interest with him, his heart is, it must be, bad; at least goodness cannot be ascendant in him.—Try the question by every similar instance; and to whatever object the passions be directed, the passions, it will be found, are not diminished as the object is magnified. The slave of wealth does not prefer the less to the greater sum; beauty does not attract as it is less, but as it is more finished and complete; kindness of a lower form binds not the spirit like that, which involves life, or all the blessings of life. We know of no such retrograde motion of the human affections to any object; and if so strange and unnatural a character should

should present itself amongst men, we should immediately pronounce that man to be an idiot, or that he had no consistent sense of the value of wealth, of beauty, or of kindness.—So is it in the question between God and his moral creature man. He has no predominant love of moral excellence, who loves not God; he can have no regular principle of grateful affection to a benefactor, whom the beneficence of God does not attract and bind; nor have good government and laws a rational hold on that mind, which feels not the highest loyalty and duty to the great Legislator and Governor of the universe.

As without piety therefore, and a propensity of the soul towards piety, our minds must be previously lost to virtue, to all its generous movements; and as being lost to virtue and virtuous affections, we are debased, degraded, ruined creatures, rejected of man as well as God; we must endeavour to recover the virtuous tone of the mind, in order to give to piety admission there in

all its power. Piety is only virtue in its highest form, in its best direction; and he who truly and properly loves virtue, must love God; and he who loves not God, nor virtue, has no love but of himself; all generous affection is killed within him.

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

THE ENCOURAGEMENTS OF PIETY AND VIRTUE.

PSALM LXXIII. I.

*Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as
are of a pure heart.*

IT is not the least of the benefits which we owe to Christianity, as having revealed the views of God's wisdom to us in this life, and the promise of a glorious hereafter, that it has removed that offence which human nature has, in all ages, been so apt to conceive at the unequal dispensations of providence in the present state of being. Not but that reason itself may generally vindicate the ways of God to man, and shew his dispensations to the different characters of men, to be by no means so unequal as they are often apprehended to

be; provided that, in the enquiry, we will do what reason requires, viz. comprehend the whole of man, his mind as well as body; and, from a fair and full statement, estimate the pleasures of both, and the influence they both have on sincere enjoyment. If we did not rate far beyond their true value the external distinctions of life, we should complain less of the appointments of providence to us than we do, and be convinced, that godliness has much more of the promise, even of this world, than we are apt to imagine. There is one circumstance, which is alone sufficient to turn the balance in its favour; namely, that in the experience of its course it has no misgivings, no after upbraidings, no repentings; that its pleasures, if less poignant, are more constant and sincere, and that they are improved and augmented by habit, and renewed by reflection. The pleasures that are addressed to the body, and depend altogether on a state of outward circumstances, are always followed by satiety, often by disgust;

gust; reflection turns away its eye from them; and, when they are accompanied with vice, they are sure, at some time or other, to breed a thousand disquietudes in the soul. Yet maugre all this, and many other weighty considerations in favour of a virtuous choice, supposing there were no recompense beyond, it still must be confessed, that virtue has not that fare in this world, which might have been expected from the constitution of a wise and moral Governor, if this life terminated the views of God to virtuous men; and that, independent of the discoveries which Christianity has made to us, there would not at all times be found sufficient encouragement to persevere in her occasionally thorny road.

The Mosaic dispensation was by no means so well calculated to check this despondency, and to support a steady faith in God; of which the writer of this Psalm is an instance. Ruminating on this scene, so unpalatable to worldly views, viz. the triumphs of the wicked, and the depression of

the virtuous; my feet, says he, were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped; for, I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. He was ready to attribute folly to the choice which he had made; and, as if despairing of a God who loved and rewarded righteousness, to cry out; I have cleansed my heart in vain, in vain have I washed my hands in innocency. He does, indeed, on more serious and enlarged reflections, and taking into his view the whole plan of providence as addressed to these different characters, correct his error; his piety recovers its ground; and, in striking terms, he condemns his ignorance, and petulance, and rashness, in thus arraigning the justice and righteousness of God.*

* It is probable, that David is not here exhibiting a picture of his own mind, but personating the character of one who had not been fully settled in his principles of religion. Such personifications, and without any previous notice of them, are justified by the best writers. St. Paul's Man of Sin, is one striking and beautiful instance. Whatever were the faults of David, he does not appear to be chargeable with a dubious and fluctuating faith in God.

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The Psalmist then, designing to confess his rash and ill-grounded despondency, prefaces his acknowledgment with that great principle, on which all piety rests, the conviction of which had happily recovered him to juster thoughts of God, and of the wisdom of a good life: truly, God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. In this glorious truth are contained two things of principal import:

I. The character of those who are the special objects of divine favour.

II. Their undoubted acceptance with God.

As it is impossible to do justice to both of these within the moderate limits of our time, I shall content myself with observing of the character to which the divine favour is appropriated, that, in no single term, could the Psalmist have so happily defined the character, as by a pure or clean heart; a term which comprehends in it as

much of perfection as is within the reach of man, and all that can be supposed to recommend him to the purity of God. It is a description which leaves no room for self-deceit, for an interested composition with our passions and vices; it shuts not the door against human frailty in many an unguarded hour; yet it holds forth no encouragement to deliberate, progressive, and unrepented wickedness, which can only be reconciled to a contaminated heart. The having a purity of heart in view, as recommending to the divine favour, unavoidably leads to the contemplation of the purity of God himself; which, while it is a most attracting object to the human mind, convinces us of the necessity of resembling God, in order to become the object of his esteem and reward. And, as all the issues of life are from the heart, a mind that aims at internal purity, to work itself cleaner and cleaner, must be continually progressive in goodness, become more guarded against temptation and surprize, acquire more abhorrence

horrence of sin, and find increasing pleasure in all the actions which may meet its own eye and the eye of its God. Our Saviour appears to have adopted the sentiments, and almost the very words of the Psalmist, when he points out a distinguished and amiable character under this description, " behold " an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile ;" not in whom is no guilt, but in whom is no guile ; a man of simplicity and probity, whose heart is right with God, and whose life is the picture of his heart, as far as in this state of trial can be expected of man. The God of mercy looks not on his unintended weaknesses and imperfections ; the God of purity looks with delight on the good affection of his heart towards him, on his fixed abhorrence of sin, on his ingenuous repentance and strenuous efforts to conquer every ill propensity ; and supports and strengthens him in the ardent endeavour of his soul, to become holy, as himself is holy, in all manner of conversation. That simplicity and godly sincerity, wherewith he declines

declines the ways of worldly wisdom, and aims to approve himself to the all-seeing eye, at all times, and in all things, in the world as in the closet; to approve himself to his God, the searcher of his intentions, his present witness and future judge; may enable him to look up to this all-perfect Being with chearful hope, and trust that his affectionate and almighty goodness will ever be extended to him.

This may suffice to give you an idea of the amiable character intended by a clean heart, the utmost of human perfection, which yet the purity of God requires, and to which all the favour of God is promised. I proceed,

II. To consider the delightful promise annexed to this character; namely, that God is good to them that are of a clean heart; that they have an interest in his special friendship and his distinguished love.

But I do not intend any formal proof of this interesting truth, but rather to illustrate
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and describe to you the operation of this goodness, and correct any mistaken notions that we may have entertained of it.

It is not indeed for us to prescribe to the wise Arbiter of the universe; to say from our limited knowledge and partial wishes, how that infinite Being, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, should manifest his goodness to us, or to any of his creatures; nor can we ever form a certain judgment of his favour and esteem, from any mere outward events, or any dispensations of his general providence to us on this side the grave. Resting, however, in God as our friend, it behoves us to live and act under the steady influence of this persuasion, that he is the only proper judge of that state which is here the best for us; resigning ourselves to his better directed goodness, to order for us those circumstances in life, and that measure of outward prosperity or adversity, which may most conduce to the perfecting our characters,

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to the views of his enlarged providence, and to the promoting our final happiness.

It is true, that, while we are in this body, we cannot be without the desires that belong to body; nor does religion frown upon these desires; nor forbid any means, consistent with honesty and virtue, which, under the providence of God, may tend to the gratification of them. We may render them the object of our modest prayer, nor fear that we offend the divine purity thereby. But, while religion allows us this exercise of our activity, and this supplication to God, even in our worldly interests, it gives us no assurance that our prayers shall be answered, or that our most strenuous efforts to attain the good in view, shall be successful. If the revelation of Jesus Christ had not represented this as the lowest interest of a Christian, and which he must ever be prepared to abandon when duty summons him to the trial, yet the very ways and course of providence in this world would be sufficient to instruct us, that God
himself

himself considers them as no evidences of his favour, and that they ought not therefore to occupy any considerable place in our hearts. In the virtuous use of prosperity, or in the virtuous bearing of adversity, our faith in God and superior adherence to duty are to be tried; but, in which of these ways, is with God absolutely to determine; and the favour of God is a thing so much above every other consideration, as to make it almost indifferent in which way God shall be pleased to prove our attachment to him, provided this great end be but attained. To seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place, and to be assured that all things, which are fit and right, will be supplied to us by a good God, is the great lesson of religion. Whether God therefore be pleased to answer our prayers, as men of this life and subject to human wishes; or whether he suspend the gratification, reserving it for a fitter season; or, whether he avert our prayer altogether, and order to us a lot in life which calls for all our faith,

faith and patience; is equally to be resolved into his wisdom and goodness.

The friends and advocates of religion are often blamed, unjustly blamed, for dwelling on what is called the dark and melancholy view of human life: but it is only because men of a worldly turn are pleased to give to their representation this unseemly name; and, whether it deserve this name or not, the view in question is itself conformed to truth, to the truth of experience, to the usual dispensations of providence, and to the representations of the christian revelation. Take the collective body of mankind, and you will find, that the gratifications of prosperity are shared but by a few; and that the major part of this few are not such, with whom a wise and good man, who aspires to the favour of God, would change condition, if he must change character also. The soberest judgment that we can form of this life clearly pronounces it to be a state of trial, and even of suffering, rather than of enjoyment; and that
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it is our business to accommodate our minds thereto, if we would accommodate them to the will and views of God.

And God is wise in this, by the very confession of men themselves; of men of the world, as well as of men, whom religion has subdued to her faith. The hero is never looked for in the course of unruffled prosperity; and as God produces not the real hero, so man trains not his imaginary hero, in this enervating school. History delights to record, and we all with avidity read the actions of the magnanimous sufferer, who has held on his way through difficulties, and dangers, and want, and every human trial.* This is the constitution of man,

* As the report of the human mind is the very principle of moral truth, it is rather extraordinary, that to account for the introduction and permission of what is called natural evil, should have been thought a matter of any difficulty. Man must, without hesitation, approve of that in his Creator, which man himself uniformly adopts as wisest and best, in whatever instances he personates the Creator. In all the creations of tragedy, epic poetry, romance, whether the man

man, this is the law of God, and, in defiance of worldly maxims, I do affirm, that he, whose mind is fitted to adversity and suffering, is best fitted to meet life in all its forms; to make the wisest use of a more favoured lot, if it should fall to his share; and, in whatever state, to bring forth and exercise those virtues, which alone dignify human nature, and which God meant to prove in him, and means to reward in a state, where enjoyment may be looked for. It is in this view principally, that we see the beauty and propriety of the example of Jesus Christ, and glory in the cross, however it was to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block. I am not so

man of religion, or the man of the world, be the author of the fiction, the imaginary hero is always exhibited on the stage of trial; severer trial than is generally provided by the great Creator; nor does it appear to enter into the conception of any one, that the great man can be formed or perfected in any other school. If so dignified an end justify man in submitting the subject of *his* affection to suffering, God, in a similar appointment for us all, ought to be justified to every human mind.

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in love with suffering as to pray for it; but God forbid that I should ever be brought to hate it; or should indispose my mind to what I ought to expect, as most agreeable to the constitution of the divine wisdom and goodness for man, and most conducive to the preparing me for a state of reward hereafter. If this be the best field of virtue and of goodness, let me not oppose my will to thine, O God, nor rob myself of the greatest good which thy providence can work out for me!

It is a truth then, which only a worldly spirit can be averse to hear, that trial and suffering are the most ordinary appointment of God for man; and are so far from being a punishment, that, if sound wisdom and our best interests were to decide, it would be considered as the effect of the divine regard and mercy towards us. It is the provocative to our best, most purifying, most lovely, and dignified virtues; and it depends upon us, whether it shall minister to our best and truest comfort here, as well as to

that happiness hereafter, in which every view of life ought to terminate.

Taking it for granted then, that suffering may, and most probably will, in some way or other, and at one time or other, befall you in your present state of pilgrimage; you will be enabled to think of your God with undiminished affection; nor be diverted from that integrity of heart and life, which must be held on unto the end, in order to the securing all his favour. You will then enter into the views of the divine mind, nor measure its goodness by the poor distinctions of this passing life, nor look with envy on the fading triumphs of the wicked; but, while you compassionately pity their short-lived triumph and delusive joy, content yourselves with the more solid comfort of a mind at peace with God and man.—Though you are not exempted from what are called the evils and distresses of life, though one event happen in common to the friend as to the enemy of God; yet, in the different temper of your minds, and the

the impression which suffering makes there, you will be able to report a glorious distinction. The one, under the pressure of an adverse fate, sees nothing but an angry and avenging judge; while you can still regard this venerable Being as your kind and propitious friend; and never more so, than when as a wise and tender father he sees fit to chastise what yet may need correction, and to bring forward what may yet be wanting to endear you to all his love. Whatever has been wanting, you have not been deprived of the consolations of religion; in every degree of trial you have found the help which has carried you through it with a decent fortitude; and your minds have still preserved that peaceful calm and hope, which has sweetened the bitterest dispensations, and is the best earnest of that fatherly goodness, which you repose on as your greatest blessing. But, what is instead of a thousand consolations, you have thence derived that benefit, of

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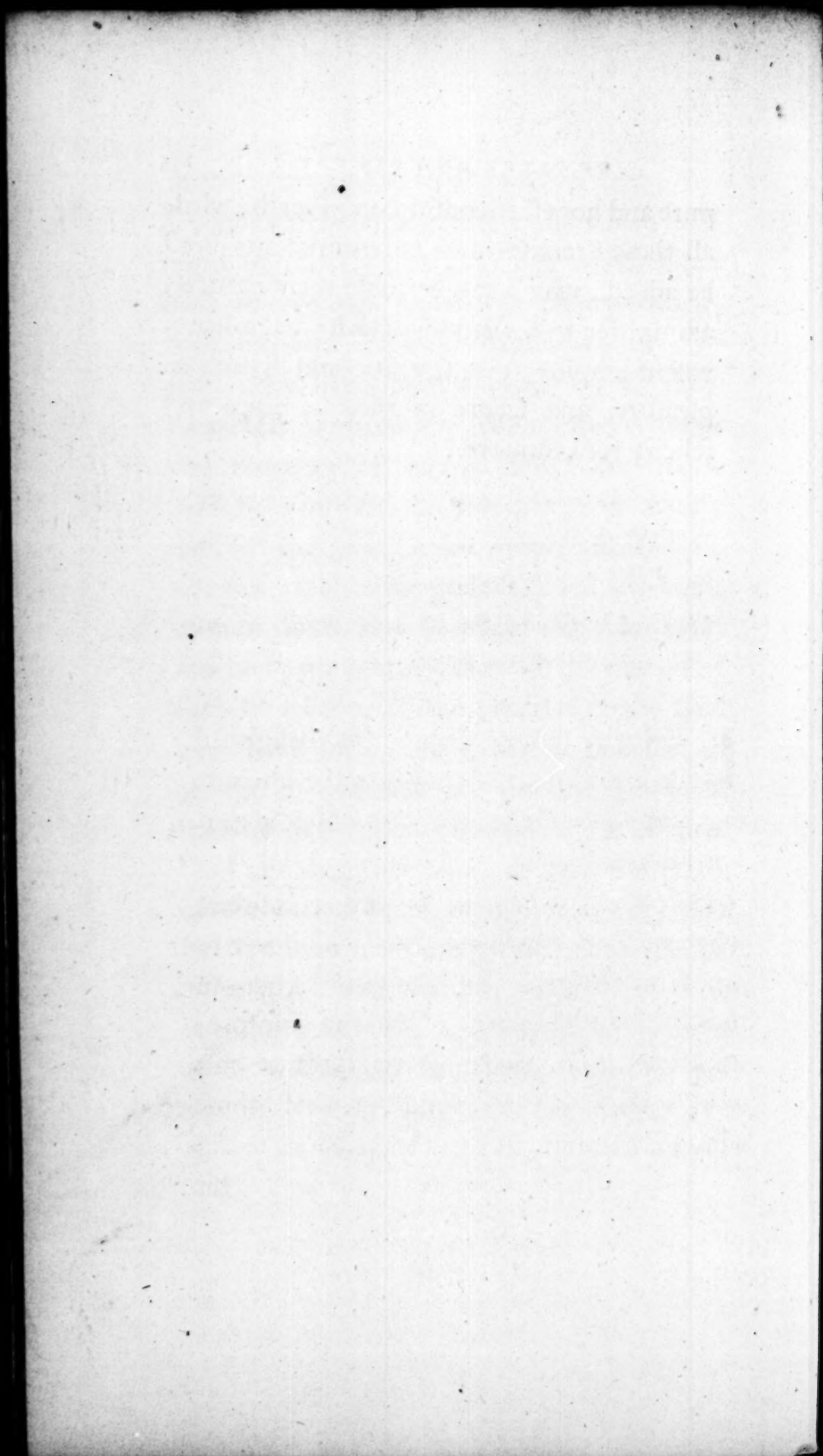
which nothing can rob you ; namely, the bettering of your heart, and the weaning your affections from a world which still might tempt and overcome you ; you are more prepared, in all devotedness and sanctity, to meet your God, whenever, from these momentary sufferings, he shall please to call you to an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

And indeed this is the test which decides all ; this is the evidence which God reserves as the overthrow of all deceitful reasoning, and the glorious distinction which he ever meant to make between the righteous and the wicked ; when he will separate his friends from the rest of mankind, and make appear to the whole world, and without any reserve, the affection which he bears to goodness. If on no other ground we could vindicate the present ways of providence, while this promise stands upon a solid foundation, all is well ; and he who, through every trial, still adheres to his God, and to his duty, may

may gloriously lift up his head. As strangers and sojourners in this first state of life, the best of men must meet the appointments which the wisdom that governs all, has been pleased to order as best for this life. But, whatever be the appointments of this life, they are set apart for glory and blessedness hereafter, when the veil shall be withdrawn that hides eternity from time. This will be such a compensation for every trial of their virtue, as almost annihilates the petty sufferings of this preparatory world. The dispensations of their wise Parent to them here have been all designed to train them for a better state, and to fit them to be partakers of the inheritance of the happy spirits above. In that happy society all will be renewed in the spirit of their minds; all fashioned after the image of the blessed God, in righteousness and true holiness; and, as they have sown to the Spirit, of the Spirit they will reap at length everlasting life. The eye of man hath not seen, and cannot

see, nor ear hear, nor can it enter into his mind to conceive, the things which God hath reserved for those who have put their trust in him. However unknown or obscure they have been in this world, they have been noticed by the proper Judge and rewarder of merit, and their worth shall be exhibited in full glory to an assembled universe. However afflicted or uncomfortable their present state hath been, all tears shall then be wiped away for ever, and every mournful disaster shall cease; they shall be received to the presence of the God who hath loved them, and be possessed of all the joys of heaven, and the glories of immortality. The crooked ways of men shall vex them no more, nor the commerce of the wicked break their peace; they shall be separated from every thing that offends, be united to the virtuous and good of every age and nation; to a society freed from all those weaknesses and little jealousies and passions, which interrupt the course of a
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pure and honest friendship upon earth; while all those exercises and entertainments shall be added, which can ennoble their natures, administer to a virtuous activity and a benevolent employ, give serenity and dignity to pleasure, and secure in them a peace and felicity for evermore.



S E R M O N VI.

THE SUBJECT OF THE ENCOURAGEMENTS OF PIETY
AND VIRTUE, CONTINUED.

PSALM LXXIII. I.

*Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are
of a pure heart.*

LET us pause under this delightful conviction, and indulge the interesting and agreeable reflections, which it cannot fail to suggest.

First then, whatever be our condition, whatever be our circumstances, whatever be our trial through life, we know where to find the most generous relief and comfort; we know, that, under every aspect of this world, the faithful friends of God, those who are constant in their endeavours to do
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his will, to possess themselves of his image, and secure all his love, are still among the wisest and the happiest of men.

They stand in that peculiar relation to the all-powerful and all-benevolent Dispenser of events, which doubles all the real goods of life, and lightens all its sorrows. They are under his eye, his constant protection; they are the chosen objects of his care and providence; and they have the pleasing assurance, that all things befall them according to his wise and merciful direction. A hair of their heads falls not to the ground without his permission; he will withhold nothing which he knows to be for their best good; he will divert every overwhelming ill, support them under every pressing difficulty, and overrule the most dark and gloomy dispensations, so as to contribute to their greater good.

To a creature so weak and dependent as man, who looks around him on every side for a protector, can any thing more effectual to all support and consolation take possession

possession of his mind? To find God in every view is to convert every thing into a blessing, is to conquer every enemy, is to find every thing well. If our passage be easy, pleasant, and prosperous; ease and prosperity will be no snare to a mind, which is thus supremely guarded by the presence of God, by the love of goodness, and by the desire of heaven. The very mammon of unrighteousness will be made to be our friend, and send up a good report of us to our future Judge; to that holy and benevolent Being, who accepts our works of temperance, of charity, and love. If adversity and suffering be our lot, our patience and virtue will come forth as gold from the furnace; and our present afflictions, which are comparatively light, and for a moment, will work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. In a word, all is received with mildness, with cheerfulness, and with a sense of duty, as the allotment of a father; of that great and good Being, who has us under his government,

government, and is training us onwards for his presence, and for everlasting life and blessedness.

The friends of God are here often hid as under a cloud. The world knows not, or respects not their worth; it is a stranger, or is averse to their excellence; and, though the destined heirs of a most glorious inheritance, they pass silently on in their way to this inheritance, without making any great figure on this ill-judging stage. Though set apart for God, this is not the time of the christian's glory; but, when he leaves this motley stage, and death breaks open the door of the other world, his God scatters all the shade and gloom in which he was enveloped, and sets out his excellence to open view. All that mildness, and unassuming grace and modesty, which attracted not the eyes of men, is acknowledged by angels, and Christ, and God; and shall be proclaimed before an assembly that knows its value.

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As in a world of mixed and varied character, and under every temptation and every trial, they have shewn their constancy to an unseen God, and separated themselves for him and his favour; he will, in the face of men and angels, take them to himself. The great God will own them as his, nor be ashamed of what the proud ones of the earth had thought beneath their notice. He will vindicate their honour, exalt them above their enemies, and set a crown of glory on their heads; while their adversaries, who once affected to despise them, shall be covered with shame and confusion. Then the laughter of sinners, and the scorn of fools shall be over; and in every character of glory and happiness, it shall be confessed who are the persons, that God delighteth to honour.

These are elevated sentiments; they are beyond the ken of the short-sighted, and beyond the reach of the low-minded; and as religion cannot lay aside her truth and dignity, to accommodate herself to ignorance or to guilt, it must be confessed, that
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she presents herself to the many under no very inviting aspect, but is attended with many formidable difficulties and many awful discouragements. The world, therefore, acquires a prejudice against her, and thinks and talks of her with disrespect. But as she is not of this world, any further than to find her few faithful followers therein, she moves in her walk on earth, amidst an impotent host of foes and slanderers, with a mild, compassionate, and benevolent dignity. Conscious of her heavenly origin, she wonders not at her reception from the children of this world; she spreads no worldly lure, soothes not with worldly promises; but where she finds a wise, a manly, brave, and good mind, points to that heaven, from which she came, as his sovereign object, his constant encouragement, his great and glorious hope. But the time is silently approaching, when wisdom shall be justified of her children; when the friend of God shall reap the fruit of his labours; when he shall glory in the
choice

choice that he has made; when he shall be acknowledged to be the only wise one of the earth, in having secured, under every circumstance of this world, a happiness beyond the grave, excellent in its nature, suited to his noblest faculties, to his largest desires, and lasting as eternity.

On the contrary, what a desperate folly must it be, to live in open enmity with God, or to satisfy ourselves with the shadowy appearance of what is good; instead of aiming at that true and faithful service, which the holiness of God can alone accept and reward.

Few, indeed, it is to be hoped, can be so horribly abandoned, as to entertain the idea of an avowed enmity to the great God; but, many there are, whose actions speak a language, as if they despise his laws, set at nought his authority, and will not have him to rule over them. And how many more take up with a barren profession of some seeming fruitless respect to him, while their hearts are far from him. But, can
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either the one or the other ever dream of escaping his righteous displeasure? Can the one imagine, that God will for ever put up with their affronting indignities; and that in a world, which was designed to prepare them for all his love, they can with impunity abuse his goodness, trample upon his patience as well as his holiness, and provoke his justice? Or can the flimsy, tricked out formalist seriously believe, that the fair shew of a heartless sanctity, will secure him an interest in the favour of that Being, whose eye pervades the universe; sees through every disguise; and seeing, accepts only the service of an affectionate, obedient, and virtuous heart.

They are deceived by the very character of the present state of trial. They interpret to their own ruin the moral forbearance of God; or, because they meet not the display of his anger here, they look forward not to it hereafter. But, without a wiser application of the present mercy of God, all that they have to expect, terminates with
this

this poor scene; nor yet, even in this, have they the comfort of one promise to rely upon, for the continuance of the life which they mispend, or of the patience which they abuse; while they have every thing to apprehend from the agency of that Being, who, by a thousand ministers of his government, can defeat their foolish trust, and blast the harvest of their misplaced affections. The state of the Jews, under the Mosaic dispensation, is thought to have been distinguished from that of every other nation on earth, by its being a proper theocracy, under the immediate rule of God, and, through his special interposition, accompanied with a more equal display of temporal punishments and blessings than is to be expected from his general providence. Perhaps this notion is ill founded; and it may be no difficulty to interpret the sanctions of the Jewish law, and the language of the Jewish wise men and prophets, as intending no more, than that length of days, prosperity, and comfort, are the more natural fruits of

virtuous than of vicious conduct, and are more to be expected as interwoven with that human nature which is the original work of God, and as the special blessing of that providence, which constantly superintends its work, in whatever degree it may overrule the events of human life. Farther than this, the fact of the Jewish history will not justify; unless in extraordinary instances, where the immediate finger of God was proclaimed by special messengers. —Indeed, the truth is, that, to an attentive observer of human life, it will be found, that the government of all mankind is much more a theocracy than is generally imagined: nor is the conclusion to be rejected, because the purposes of divine providence appear to be brought forward by the intervention of secondary causes. If happiness be estimated by sincere and pleasant enjoyment, then it is not only a general, but almost an universal truth, that happiness is a stranger to vice; that, allowing even for the debasement of
taste,

taste, the vicious do not even know enjoyment. They pursue her, but they find her not ; and whether it be that the eagerness of their wishes, the intemperance of their expectations, the mismanagement of their minds, the usurpations of a selfish spirit, the want of sympathy with others, or the being generally driven by their passions and by the object of their pursuit into a state of hostility with their fellow-creatures, or lastly their having no resource under disappointment ; whether it be that any or all of these causes defeat them of the expected joy, the truth is, that their whole plan is an impotent struggle against human nature and against human life, and therefore against God, the author of both. To speak in plain terms, whoever contemplates human life with attention, finds ample reason to conclude, that, among the sons of vice, among the mere children of this world, neither the great man, nor the rich man, nor the man of pleasure, is by any means a happy man ; and yet if, with

a mind devoted to this world, happiness be attainable, greatness, and wealth, and pleasure, ought to administer it. Worldly wisdom insults over the timidity, the credulity, the inactivity, the imprudence, which often mark the character of the truly good man; but, with all their insults, he has the blessing which they have sought after; careless of this world, he enjoys it more; every thing is friendly to him; or the good temper, the cheerfulness, the temperance, the government of his mind, converts every thing into a friend, and extracts that pleasure from it, which it was designed to minister, and which virtue knows only to receive.

But, though this should be the mere illusion of the closet, and the excusable persuasion that it is so from the virtuous wish that it were so; yet the being cut off from all the resources, and pleasures, and prospects, which are proper to the righteous man; the having no fund within himself, no friend in his God, no hope from a better world;

world; the having all his dependence at the mercy of time, of change, and of death, renders it of little consequence, whether success attend his worldly aims or not. A few years of low-minded enjoyment, preceding an indetermined length of miserable existence, are as nothing in the estimate of happiness; and deduct nothing from the folly of a life which is conducted on such a plan. And, whether religion and virtue have equal, more, or less, expectation from this world, yet the well-founded expectation of immortal glory and felicity, beyond the grave, yields a joy which passes all the transports of vice. Religion is, even in a view of this life, excellent; she is wonderfully suited to the mind which God has given us, and to the world which God has placed us in; her reward springs out of her very genius and character; she gives the sweetness to every flower, she extracts the sting from every thorn; she has joys attendant on her, which strangers intermeddle not with. But she has still better things

in reserve; her after rewards are a great and noble recompense for every suffering we can be called to, and for every sacrifice we can make in her cause. The brightest and most illustrious scene of the christian's triumph lies in another world, where happiness awaits him, infinitely superior to what this, in its proudest pomp and glory, can promise; a happiness every way fitted to his noblest capacities, to his purest and most benevolent desires, beyond his utmost conceptions, and durable as his immortal soul.

Let us then adopt it as our fixed persuasion, and as the principle which shall direct our whole conduct; that goodness is interwoven with happiness; that it has the agency of an omnipotent Being continually working for its welfare; and that, in the whole constitution of God, every thing is adverse to us, if we be alienated from her ways. A clean heart, with all the virtues which spring out of it, is kindred to God; it is the bond which unites the creature with

with the Creator, and cannot fail of happiness in a world upheld and governed by him. This purity, in all its temper, in all its exercise, let us cultivate, as the great business which we have to do in this world. Let no name or profession of religion content us; but may we enter with our best and most honest heart into all the divine temper and life; as little satisfying ourselves with an external lifeless form, as we know from the voice within us and the voice without us, that the God, on whom we depend and to whom all our views are directed, will not be satisfied therewith. Let it be our highest wisdom to surrender up our whole selves to him; to think, to live, to act, as being affectionately devoted to his will. If this once become the habitual temper of our minds and governing principle of our actions, we may bid adieu to fear; we may look on the world, its frowns and smiles, with equal placidness, and with equal superiority. In whatever way we make our voyage through life, we are secure from

shipwreck; we shall certainly reach our destined harbour, and obtain the one object for which the voyage is at all of importance. Though our fate in this world should be harder than what the compassion of God ever permits it to be to any of the sons of men, yet the world beyond is a glorious object, worthy of all our perseverance; the God, who invites us thither, will not disappoint our virtuous trust in him; he will sustain us by his guardian providence; our trial will terminate in death, as the last summons of our faith and hope; and we shall pass to the enjoyment of a blessedness, such as is only in the benevolence of God to will, and in the omnipotence of God to confer.

SERMON

S E R M O N VII.

DISGRACE OF THE CHRISTIAN NAME.

JAMES II. 7.

*Do they not blaspheme that worthy name, by
which ye are called?*

AS the christian church, when this common name of Christian was assumed, as the future appellation of all the professors of the christian religion, was a collection of people from different nations, governments, and sects; and as the Jews in particular, who were the first converts, laboured under the strongest prejudices against the Gentiles, both on a national and religious account, and were irreconcilable to them in christian brotherhood; and still farther, as there was a strange propensity in the converts of that age to affect the name of that particular apostle or disciple, by whom

whom they had been converted to the christian faith, which threatened to divide them into factions, and to evaporate all laudable and virtuous zeal in the bigotry of party distinctions: as this, I say, was the state of the christian church, when this name, as a common designation, began to be assumed, of which there is abundant proof in the epistles of St. Paul; it is highly probable, that it was done to subserve the following purposes.

First, to reconcile these converts of every nation or government more cordially with each other; and, by abolishing all former distinctions, to extinguish the animosities and disgusts which sprang out of these distinctions.

Secondly, in the very import of the name, to intimate to all, the common and equal providence of God; and their common and equal right to all the immunities, advantages, and promises of the Gospel; and that whosoever believed in Christ should not henceforth be ashamed, as there was

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no difference between Jew and Greek; the same Lord, whom their common name respected, being rich unto all who called upon him.

Thirdly, the abolition of the former names of Jew and Gentile, in the more honourable name of Christian, was expedient in another view; as idolatry on the one hand, superstition on the other, and vice on both, had rendered the names of Jew and Gentile disgraceful, and even infamous, to those who were become the professors of the pure and moral religion of Christ.

Fourthly, it is more than probable, that the uniting the followers of Christ under one name, derived immediately from their master, was designed to eradicate their attachment to particular leaders, by constantly holding up to view one proper lord and master, to whom their first attachment was due; to guard them against all little, uncharitable, and often immoral partialities, by centering the allegiance of all in Jesus Christ, as their supreme head, to whom
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alone, under God, they owed allegiance, and by the appeal to whose authority all that related to faith or practice ought to be determined.

Fifthly, as names have been found in all experience to be an excellent bond of union, none could be more happily devised than the name of Christian to unite the converts, however multiplied, and wherever dispersed, in one community, by the idea of a common and equal relation to the same founder; whose religion proceeded from the love of God to all; whose precepts taught, and whose life enforced, the divine lesson of universal charity; who instructed his disciples to look upon each other as brethren, and, under this relation, obliged them to harmony and peace, and to all mutual kind wishes and kind offices.

Lastly, it was a constant remembrancer to every individual, who assumed this respectable name, to act up to the dignity of it, in the faithful practice of those virtues, which alone can do any honour to a christian;
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tian; and that they should not blaspheme the worthy name by which they are called, but that every one, who nameth the name of Christ, should depart from iniquity, as utterly abhorrent to it.

This last, out of all the uses to which this respectable name may be thought to subserve, I propose to make the leading object of my address; because it is the one which my text immediately suggests, and because it is that which may be deemed to comprehend all the others.

My intention then will be to shew how this name continually reminds us of the especial obligations which we are under to piety and sanctity of life; and how much, in any other course, we truly violate the worthy name by which we are called.

I shall, I. notice the obligations which the name carries with it, and then, II. enforce them by additional reflections.

First, whoever as his own act, and not as the imposition of others, or the mere gift of custom, of courtesy, or convenience, assumes

assumes the denomination of a Christian, and would resent the being refused this honourable name, does in this virtually admit the law of Christ to be the light of his mind and the rule of his life. He does confess his obligation to receive the doctrines which it inculcates, and obey the sacred precepts which are the end of all its doctrines. Light and trifling as the name may appear through familiar use, this is seriously implied in the very name and notion of a Christian, and will be seriously demanded of us in the day of awful reckoning. Every common name carries with it the idea of, and obligation to, some common character; in every mechanic, the knowledge and the practice of his respective art; in every merchant, an acquaintance with commerce, its principles and laws, so far as his sphere of merchandise extends, and that he practise all that honour, integrity, and that observance of his word and his signature, which constitute the religion of the man of trade. The name of a soldier involves

involves in it fidelity to his leader, obedience to lawful commands, and contempt of danger and death whenever duty calls. Such, in pursuits of vastly inferior moment to that of the Christian, is the obligation annexed to every secular name we bear. Every one, who flagrantly violates this obligation, feels at heart the disgrace which he brings upon the name; and the world in all these worldly interests is ready enough to retract the name when it is thus dishonoured, and strip the unworthy professor of his borrowed appellation. And shall religion, forsooth, the highest glory and the highest interest of man, shall religion alone prostitute her sacred honours to idle, ignorant, and unprofitable professors? Is christianity the only name, and the only profession, which carries with it no serious, useful, and reputable obligation? Why then assume it, if it have no appropriate character? Why not with more manliness renounce the name and character together? Why range under a master that we derive
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no instruction from, a preceptor whose rules we neither consult nor regard, a leader whose example we have no desire, no ambition, no soul to imitate? No! the world, so wise and consistent in all other instances, is not irrational and foolish in the single profession of christianity; and, however men may in fact dishonour it, if they were appealed to man by man, they will individually own, that the common name they bear comprehends the obligation of a character conformed to the doctrines, laws, and rules of that sacred institution from which it is derived, and which their impiety and vices disgrace. But the frequency of the disgrace dulls the sense of it in every one, and each is complaisant to his fellow in not holding up to his view the reproach of his conduct. Few dare throw the first stone; but, conscious of their own inconsistent behaviour, quietly leave each other to wear a name to which they have no title, to carry in the face of the world the ostensible marks of a most honourable profession; while they
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shut their eyes at each others open and avowed disobedience to its instructions, laws, and principles. If instances were as rare in the profession of christianity, as in the ordinary professions of civil life, of ignorance and violation of the constituent rules thereof; impiety and immorality in a christian would be looked on with as much scorn and abhorrence, as cowardice in a soldier, or bankrupt honour in a tradesman; and their fellowship be as much shunned. Thus a sympathy in infamy renders christians civil and indulgent to each other during their Master's absence; but the time is coming, when he will visit his disorderly household; when the name which they have blasphemed, the professions which they have trampled on, the religion which they have dishonoured, and the interests which they have abandoned, shall be awfully reckoned for; and the punishment of their apostacy will find no consolation from the number of their associates.

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Secondly,

Secondly, the character and the obligations of a christian existed before the name was known; and, though the name was intended to co-operate with the genius of christianity, yet it is by no means of its essence; and that very world and its polluting vices, to which we bend and accommodate the name, is the very abyss, out of which this sublime and pure religion was designed to rescue us. Did Jesus Christ then descend from heaven; did he tabernacle in this flesh; were all his wonderful miracles wrought, his divine doctrines taught; did he speak as never man spake, and maintain a life unspotted from the world, and exhibit all his glorious virtues, and bear the insults and persecution of men, and die to witness his integrity, his love of mankind, and the love of God for us all; and did the hand of God raise him from the grave, only, forsooth, to confer upon his followers the poor blessing of a barren and an empty name? And are the promises of his Gospel, the reward of which
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he is the first fruit, heaven with its eternal blessedness, the vision of God, and the society of the spirits above, are these all submitted to the wonderful charm of a few letters, with which we good-naturedly compliment each other? No!

Deus non adest, nisi dignus sit vindice nodus.

God does not reveal himself, unless the cause be worthy of God; and the idea, that all this wonderful provision of the Creator of man, this preparation for ages by the succession of prophets; this disposition of his providence, to fit the world for the reception of so extraordinary a messenger; and his arm displayed in all that he did, his wisdom and truth revealed in all that he taught, his goodness and mercy in all that he suffered; the idea, that all this œconomy and interposition of the great Ruler of the universe was planned and manifested for no nobler end, is an indignity which is directed at God himself, and which they, who offer it, will do well to consider how they

shall answer for it to God, when they shall be called into his presence. Yet what other idea, I pray, do those entertain of it, who shew nothing of christian but the name; who pass unconcernedly through this world of moral trial, and hardly give one hour to converse with the doctrines or life of their divine Master, nor make one effort to put him on in all the grace and venerableness of his character? Yet they are christians, and christianity is exhausted in the sprinkling a few drops of water over them at their birth, and in their condescending to wear through life the name with which this ceremony was conferred upon them. Oh infidelity! well mayst thou lift up thy head, and utter thy insulting scoffs; when thou hearest so many asserting a revelation from heaven, and the interposition of a God of power, of grace, and holiness, to produce no better end than thou beholdest in the lives of these unthinking, dissipated, and immoral professors.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, christianity, as if it had foreseen this abuse, has made every possible provision against it; has marked it with such terrors, as many a nominal christian, if he read at all, must read with shame and self-abasement, as well as alarming apprehension. To every one of you are these admonitions of our common Lord addressed; if your righteousness exceed not the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye are none of mine. Alas! how many of you have not their poor show of righteousness to boast of! Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Oh thou endeared Benefactor, thou willing Victim to the recovery of fallen man, and what wilt thou esteem those, who insult thy name and thy religion with every vice which thou hast awfully forbidden? Ah! thy sentence is announced; thou hast declared them to be disowned and rejected; enemies, and the worst of enemies, to thy cause; and that not all their mock address 'of Lord, Lord, and their empty professions will avail them,

when thou comest to reckon with thy servants; but one dignified judgment will beat back their wicked hopes; I know ye not, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. If Jesus Christ or his apostles had left this most important object of our religion undecided, some excuse might be urged in palliation of the vices which insult the name, and sadly injure the cause of christianity. But the whole language of the New Testament is pointedly against them. The name, which they wear, it reclaims; the profession, which they with so much levity put on, it tears off; and owns no one as the disciple and follower of Jesus Christ, who has not learnt from him to love goodness in all its exercise to God and man. He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; come from among them, and be ye separate, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, is the invariable language of the Gospel to all who aspire to the honour of the christian name. If to
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wallow in the filth of this world, and to while away the valuable hour of our preparation for eternity in the mere acknowledgment of a religion, which wins us not to piety and virtue, which renders us not more like to God here, nor more fit to meet him face to face hereafter; if this were consistent with the dispensation of christianity; it were a question hard to be answered by its most sanguine friend, why christianity were dispensed to us at all. There was enough of vice, and enough of unprofitable religion before Jesus Christ made his appearance in this benighted and corrupted world. But christianity gloriously vindicates itself from all reproach; it is in every view worthy of God, and fitted for man; and they, who with all its elevating truths, sanctifying precepts, animating promises, attractive examples, plain declarations, and solemn warnings, will live in the profession of it, without bringing it home to their hearts and to their lives; must look for no vindication of their con-

duct in the religion which they prophane. They must answer from their own perverse and wicked wills for the ruin of themselves; for the ruin of a soul, which not all the truth of God, not all the mercy of the Gospel, not all the purity of its lessons, and the sanctity of its Founder, could lift above the idlenesses, and waste, and debasing lusts of this world. Nor must they answer for the ruin of themselves alone, but for the dishonour which they have brought on a religion, which was designed to operate to such extensive good; for the triumph which they have afforded to its avowed enemies; for the mischievous and corrupting influence of their example.

Lastly, if every other evidence were silent, the example of Christ would decide the question; and leave every one without excuse, who affects to be his follower, and makes no serious and well-prosecuted attempt to follow him in those virtues, which constitute the highest glory of their Leader's character, and one of the greatest benefits
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which God designed for man in the dispensation of christianity. The universal acknowledgment and practice of mankind, in all similar connections, convict the nominal christian, by proclaiming this to be expected from every follower of every leader, as far as their ability and sphere of action extends; and that, to make the character of their leader no subject of their study, nor his acknowledged excellences any object of their imitation, is a complete renunciation of all pretences to follow him. Now it is the peculiar excellence of the character of Jesus Christ, that there is not one virtue in him, which does not invite imitation, and is not within the reach of imitation. All in him is admirably fitted to every situation and rank of human life, though the resemblance, when acquired, carries with it the highest exaltation of the human nature.

If Jesus Christ had acted the part of a mysterious politician, had raised to himself

a name in the complicated arts of government or war, or in the subtle disquisitions of philosophy or metaphysics; the ambition of his followers might be contented with the humble admiration of his superior abilities, and plead their want of capacity, of opportunities, or of advantages, adapted to the higher task of treading in his steps, of bringing into exercise the same talents, and acquiring a similar reputation. But, all the virtues of his character, in which he is proposed as our pattern, and in which the name that we assume invites us to follow him, are the common provision of God to all men; confined to no birth, to no rank, to no particular abilities, to no artificial education. They are all comprehended in the love of God, in the love of goodness, and in the love of our fellow-creatures; they ask but the disposition of the will, to find in every one a correspondence of natural genius and abilities. No one can plead that he is incapable of finding

ing out God, so as to excite within himself every affection of reverence, gratitude, love, and resignation; and, in the whole of that generous piety, which distinguished the Saviour of the world; no one can plead, that his soul is naturally averse to, or incapable of entering into this beautiful part of his Master's character. The lessons of temperance, of self-denial, of chastity of mind, and purity of life, which constitute all the philosophy of Jesus Christ, and so illustrate his character, come home to the feelings of every man. They need but to be read, to excite conviction and desire; and the most transient mention of them produces that inward acquiescence, which is the self-condemnation of every immoral christian, and which will join issue hereafter in the overwhelming sentence of his Judge. A mild and obliging temper, a compassionate feeling of a fellow's woes, a liberal heart and a liberal hand, are the everlasting glory of a man as well as of a christian; they are
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the bond of civil society; and are never contemplated even by the worst of men, but with reverence and admiration. Where then is there a foot of ground on which an immoral christian can take his stand, and plead an exemption from the obligation which his name includes, of imitating his Leader in those virtues, which constitute all our present resemblance to our Creator, which conscience, every moment in which she is permitted to speak to us, so forcibly recommends; and which is one principal end, for which the example of Christ was exhibited to our world in so condescending and engaging a form? Our name imports similitude of temper and behaviour; but we renounce the name in whatever degree we fly from the graces of our Master's life. In whatever degree our inattention to duty, our mismanagement of our minds, and desperate abandonment of ourselves to our passions and lusts, is the cause of our unlikeness; and in whatever degree we shall
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be found to have used no fuitable endeavours, and to have made no generous efforts to become conformable to our Lord; we run counter to all the designation of our profession and name; and must, in our perverse and wilful disaffection, abide the consequences of it in the future world.

SERMON

S E R M O N V I I I .

DISGRACE OF THE CHRISTIAN NAME.

J A M E S I I . 7 .

*Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by
which ye are called?*

WHAT I proposed in my address to
you from this passage, was,

I. To establish the ground of those obligations, which the name of Christian carries with it, to an exalted piety and a pure morality.

II. Having thus secured your conviction, to gain, if possible, your affections, by annexing such reflections as seemed most fitted

ted to persuade you to act up to these acknowledged obligations.

The arguments which I appealed to, as necessarily connecting the virtues of christianity with the profession, were,

First, that every professional name supposes an appropriate character, which was illustrated from the uniform judgment of men in the ordinary occupation of life. A mechanic, a soldier, a merchant, a politician, a philosopher, are expected to conform to the character of their professions; and the name which they assume is deemed by general consent to be renounced, if in some degree they answer not thereto. They feel at heart the disgrace which they bring upon their profession; and the world, which acts with propriety enough in all worldly interests, retracts the name which is thus dishonoured, and strips the unworthy professor of his borrowed appellation.

Secondly, the demand of a more than ordinary character was argued from the utter absurdity of supposing, that the beneficent

ficent scheme of christianity should proceed from God, if it were not designed to promote an end worthy of God. To refer the dispensation of the christian religion, with all its provision of truth and grace, to the wise and moral Ruler of man; and suppose that no nobler end was to be answered to man than the enrolling him under the name and profession of Christ; is an insult upon, a blaspheming of, God; and they, who either directly or consequentially authorise such a construction, will do well to consider how they shall answer it to God, when they shall be called into his presence.

Thirdly, the obligation of uniting with the name the virtues of a christian was more decisively inferred from the positive commands of the New Testament, which contains the sacred institutes of the christian profession. What is there enjoined on every voluntary adherent to this religion must, without controversy, be deemed to belong to the profession of it. If Jesus Christ and his apostles had left this important object

of our religion undecided, some excuse might be urged in palliation of the vices which disgrace the name and injure the cause of christianity. But the language of the New Testament is pointedly against this profanation; it foresaw and it condemns it; and in plain, in strong, and awful terms, it denounces its woe against it.

Lastly, the example of Jesus Christ closed the argument, and left every one without excuse, who affects to be his follower, and makes no serious and well-prosecuted attempt to follow him in those virtues, which are the distinguishing glory of their Leader's character, and which constitute one of the greatest benefits which God intended for man, by exhibiting such a character to their view. It was also observed to be a peculiar advantage of christianity above every other profession, that the character of their Leader is plain and simple; descends to every station of life; and, though it invites to the highest exaltation of the human nature, asks no peculiar abilities, no artificial

ficial education, but meets that provision which God has furnished in the universal make of the human mind.

This is a brief recapitulation of the preceding discourse, in which I contemplated the ground of those obligations, which condemn the name, wherever it appears without the virtues, of a christian. But in this I had no thought of entering into a formal discussion of the question, as if any of you needed to have it proved to you; but only to lead your minds to a serious conversation with the claims of your holy religion; such as might awaken serious thoughts, and check that levity and unconcernedness about your conduct, which is a disgrace to yourselves, and brings an unmerited disgrace on your religion.

It remains that I second this impression by such reflections as may be pertinent to the subject.

Let me awaken you then to a more respectful sense of that worthy name by which you are called. You derive it from the Son

of God, the beloved of the Supreme; who appeared on earth with the wisdom, the beneficence, and mercy of the Creator of the world; who was the friend, the teacher, the exemplar of man; the most exalted, the most endeared character that ever trod the stage of human life: whose dignity is witnessed in the repeated testimonies which God bore to him; in his being to us, and to every valuable purpose of a providential interposition, the representative of God: whose wisdom surpassed all the wisdom of the schools, and revealed those sublime and useful truths, which the painful research of ages had in vain enquired after: whose character was not only without spot or blemish, but adorned with every active, useful, and lovely virtue: in fine, who was not more eminent for a power, than for a grace and goodness, above humanity: not more endeared to man by his enlightened doctrines and salutary precepts, than for exhibiting in his own life what man may aspire to, and what approach to the highest moral

moral excellence his Creator has made him capable of. In all this, there is nothing like him to be found amongst the teachers, prophets, or lawgivers, that the world has known.

If then it be the ambition of human nature to connect itself with great and honourable personages; to claim relation to, and bear the name of those, who have been illustrious for their rank, their great achievements, and the rare and towering virtue of their characters; who in this can vie with the Christian? Who can claim honour from his name with a better grace, and with a nobler pride? It is no conqueror of his species, no subtle and useless dogmatizer, whom our name looks up to; but the benefactor of mankind; whose abilities, power, and virtues, were all consecrated to the service of our world; who did and suffered more, to promote the true interests of this rational creation, than all the benefactors, which the world has known, either have done or were capable of doing.

With our relation to him, all the benefits which his ministry, his miracles, his virtues, his life, and his death, were intended to produce, have descended to us; they are the inheritance which is derived entire to us from the glorious Predecessor whose name we bear. I would not with a stoic spleen, or a monkish fullness, defame the pride of ancestry, and the flattering distinction of family honours; when well directed, it is a generous pride, founded in human nature, and intended to stimulate to worthy deeds. To succeed to the name and inheritance of those who have deserved well of mankind, and who by great and glorious talents have risen above the level of their fellow-creatures, is an honour which all must feel who have it. But, from this principle in human nature, I would awaken the higher honour in every breast, which the relation to Christ conveys; before whom nobles, and kings, and conquerors, and wise men, are but as the stars, which hide themselves in the presence of the sun. This is the

the privilege of us all; but, while we all are vain enough of other distinctions, and carry our heads aloft under the name and heraldry of illustrious ancestors, and are sometimes lifted, I hope, to generous deeds; while we are proud of being the scholars of some eminent master, or the members of some distinguished civil society; the greater and the truer glory of the Christian name passes almost into oblivion, and that elevation of soul and character, which the being a Christian ought to inspire, is observed in but a few.

But, if this elevation of soul and character can alone vindicate the honours which we claim, and shew us worthy of the name we bear; is it not a most affecting sight to look upon the Christian world, and see the humiliating character to which it descends. There must be some radical abuse in the institutions of civil society, which operates to the neglect and violation of the benefits of christianity, or the wonderful provision of this religion for the im-

provement and perfection of mankind, would more gloriously appear. The fault is not, cannot be, in human nature. Human nature, of herself, leaps forward to embrace this religion in all its grace and blessedness; the God, who sent it, knew the creature to whom it was sent; he knew that it was fitted for him, and he for it.—The one great resisting power is to be looked for in the interested corruptions of the great ones of the earth; and in the immoral customs and fashions, which they find it convenient to disseminate through the community, in order to appease the sense of their own shame, or to render the multitude more pliant to their worldly views, and more submissive to their systems of domination. Often have I grated on this harsh string, oftener than some may commend; for, though it is a string discordant to my whole soul, yet indignation will speak in such a cause. Perhaps if your professions led you equally to converse with the pure and benign religion of Christ, and to contrast it with the ways of

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of the world, and with the policies and interests of our most christian governments, you would feel as I did ; nor withhold the same testimony to the cause of God, of his Son, and the better interests of the Christian world. Christianity bleeds at heart from this league, which worldly policy has entered into with folly and vice ; and can its sincere and honest friends forbear to bleed in sympathy with it ?

Who that has the New Testament and another world in his view, and that has the love of God and of man in his heart, can forbear to tell these corruptors of our race, that, as the evil springs from them, the remedy lies with them ; or, if springing not from them, that it is not the less their duty to correct it ; that it is the noblest walk of government to form good men, and that, in thus forming them, they form every thing that is great ; that, in neglecting this duty and paying no proper attention to this best object of government, they shew as wretched a policy with respect to this world,

world, as to another; and that if the devouring selfishness and dissipation of every rank, but particularly the profligacy of the lower ranks, which has reached to so great a height, meet not with a timely and powerful check, there will, in the hour of their country's greatest need, be hardly found an honest or a brave man in it. A false judgment is often formed of national health and vigour from the most deceitful appearances, and a dangerous security is reposed thereon. But we often behold a florid and a glowing countenance, where decay has fastened on the seat of life, and there is no strength, no soundness within, to resist the slightest attack from without. So, because a face of peace, a flourishing commerce, and a full revenue spread their smiles, they, good men, persuade themselves that all is well. But let them look into the page of Roman history, and they will meet a more specious and promising shew of health in that stupendous empire; while, by the confession of all posterity, consumption and death

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had got hold of its heart. If they mean but tolerably well, as men only of this world and friends of their country's glory and prosperity, I wonder how they can so supinely look on these enormities. One would almost think, that they supposed themselves capable of counteracting the laws of God and the laws of human nature; and of producing health, vigour, and happiness, from what God, in the eternal rule of his moral government, has consigned to disease, and feebleness, and misery.

It is the misfortune of men to be broken by use and familiarity to things, which on a serious reflection they severally condemn; for, that with the principles of a man and a Christian these things should not be so, is decided in a moment, by an appeal to any honest and good mind. Take any one of you the New Testament in your hands, and say, whether one page, or one word in it, favours a variety of manners and institutions, which are triumphant in every Christian state; and whether, as amenable hereafter

hereafter to God and to Jesus Christ, you would suffer them for a moment to exist, if you had the power to remove them. And that they are of no trifling moment, that they are no light impediments in the way of duty, that they have a very seducing influence, let the fact be tried by your own experience. Have you not often gone from such a place as this, with strong conviction, with honest penitence, with virtuous resolutions; and have you not found them instantly dissipated by the entanglements and bewitcheries of a corrupted and ill-lessoned world, like the promise of the spring before the killing frost? Is it possible then to speak well of these things, or of the great ones, from whom, as their prime source, these desolating outrages flow? If they be not, I know of no other rulers of the darkness of this world, of no other wickedness in high places, of which the prophetic spirit of the Gospel speaks in such affecting terms, and of which it warns the virtuous Christian, portending to it so dreadful

dreadful a reckoning. They have their day; and their insulted Master, and the religion whose better influence they pervert, and the fellow-christians, whom they so lightly commit to dishonour, will have theirs. If it must needs be, that such great offences come, woe unto them through whom they come; it were better that they had gone down to the grave with innocence, in whatever afflicting form, than that they had thrown these stumbling-blocks in the way of their fellow-christians, whom God sent his Son to rescue out of the defilements of this world, and purify unto himself, as a people zealous of good works.

But, mistake me not; it is not from the pleasure of finding fault, the pleasure only of a malignant mind, that on this subject I call these offences into view; but to guard you against their influence; and, let your conduct in the midst of these offences be what it will, to tell you, plainly and seriously, what your conduct ought to be. Whether the fashions and policies of the
world

world be more or less unfavourable to Christianity, it is the world in which God has placed you, which you are not to quit but at his bidding, and in which, so long as he shall please, you are to act your parts for eternity. Much have they to answer for, who, against the spirit of your common religion, throw any stumbling-blocks in your way; but you, who turn aside from your Christian course on account of these offences, will have to answer also; nor will the greater blame of your corruptors exculpate you, who suffer yourselves to be corrupted by them. If you be Christians, remember that your Christianity lies in the New Testament, not in the fashions of the world, let these fashions be what they will; and that by the rules of the New Testament you will be tried. These rules you know, or ought to know; and if it be any concern with you, not to blaspheme the worthy name by which you are called, and forfeit the inheritance which is promised to those who do the honours of it; by these rules,
and

and these alone, it becomes you to act in all your journey through life. You may soothe yourselves, if soothing and self-delusion rather than correction and self-amendment be your object; you may soothe yourselves with the hope, that God will make allowance for the state of society in which you live; for the difficulties, temptations, and entanglements, which an ill-ordered world throws in your way: but this allowance is with God; and how far it may extend, is a very dangerous calculation. Besides, this very attempt to soothe yourselves is the condemnation of your conduct; it proves that you know better; and that, if you be placed in a wicked world, its wickedness does not much offend you; that it puts you upon no extraordinary guard; that, if the world will bear all the guilt, you are ready enough to partake of its crime; and, in fine, that, with all its wickedness, you would rather live in it, and conform to it, than virtuously stand aloof from it, and live to God and to another world.

world. I speak plainly to you, but I speak truth; and useful truth; the truth, which I know you tell yourselves in many an hour of sober reflection; and that truth, which if you do not hear to purpose now, and if there be any faith in the New Testament, will be more awfully told you in a world, where the fashions of this bear no sway.

But perhaps you will ask me, what can all this aim at? Are we then to renounce the world; and is this the unamiable picture which you would give us of the good-tempered religion of Christ? Suppose that, without hesitation or reserve, I should answer, yes!—Surely it will sound as well from my mouth to say, renounce this world rather than renounce the next, as from yours, to plead the good-temper of your religion for the absence of those virtues, which alone Christianity makes any account of, and alone promises to reward. If Christianity be so very good-tempered a religion, as to admit a voluntary surrender to temptation
and

and to crime, tell me in what page of this sacred book you find this indulgent consolation. But, if you know of no such page, I hope you do not suppose that I have a new commission from heaven, to spread an easier and more pliant religion before you than Jesus Christ himself delivered.* But in truth I make no such answer; never shall I say, renounce the world; because my Master has said no such thing, and because I know no other way of practising the self-denying and generous virtues of a Christian, than in the face of the world, and in an open intercourse with it. The innocence of the New

* I am well aware, that the orthodox faith of all Christendom has either directly or indirectly given this ease and pliancy to the religion of the New Testament. This worst trait of orthodoxy is now almost obliterated, and is hardly any where to be found but with the most illiterate enthusiasts. It is, however, greatly to be regretted, that they can still appeal to the established creed of their country. But, wherever any preacher utters such a doctrine, the plainest and most unlearned Christian may reduce him to silence, if not to shame, by requiring his authority for such a representation of the Christian religion.

Testament is not the innocence of a desert or of a cloister : it is the innocence of a man who can meet temptation in his way ; and, with a recollection of his honour, of his duty, of his God, of his Redeemer and of another world, tread it under his feet. It is the innocence of a man, who uses life, without abusing it ; who preserves himself, not by flying from the world, from its connections, no nor from its pleasures, unsatisfactory as they are, but from its vices ; by always maintaining God and a good conscience, and indulging to men, and their demands upon him, no farther than God and a good conscience allow : who takes care, that the world winds not itself about his heart ; who can retire from it with peace, and without that pollution, which dreads the conversing with his God ; and who in his retirement can find, from the resources of piety, a strength and fortitude to meet the world anew.

But thus it is, the sons of folly and vice know nothing but extremes ; and, as the world

world is every thing to them, while they indulge in it, they know no religion, but what consists in a sour abhorrence of it. Alas! this is a virtue as much below the magnanimity of a Christian, as the sympathy of a man. To fly from the world is a poor refuge; and if, in flying from it, we think to find our Creator more, we lose sight of our fellow-creature, and therewith of that ample field, in which some of the noblest virtues of a Christian are to be exercised. In fine, all this is but solemn trifling. There lies the world, here lies your duty; and these two are to be reconciled together, by giving the latter the ascendancy in your hearts, and compelling the former to be subservient thereto. There may be, and there will be difficulties in effecting this reconciliation; but, difficulties are the trial which your Creator has appointed you; and the Christian, of all others, ought to blush at being humbled by difficulties. Bad as the world is, it is not without examples, which may shew, to every

one of you, what a man and a Christian may aspire to; what human nature, assisted by such a religion as that of Christ, is capable of attaining to: examples, which as freely mix with the world, perform as many of its duties, know as much of chearful and sincere enjoyment, and appear therein with as much honour and repute, as those who sacrifice all their christianity thereto.

Indeed, to sum up the whole, the fault of our behaviour lies not in human nature, nor in the moral difficulties of life, nor yet in the artificial temptations and corruptions of the world, though these do dreadfully co-operate with human weakness; but in our really being strangers to the New Testament, and using no proper endeavours to possess ourselves of the spirit which it breathes. How is it to be expected, that we should advance in a profession, which we hardly ever study; to which we pay no regular, deliberate, and habitual attention? Other sciences we can learn, other professions we can excel in; but labour, perseverance,

verance, and practice, are necessary to them all. Why then, I pray, of all the acquirements of man, should religion be expected to descend supernaturally from heaven, and take possession of a soul unprepared, and reluctant to her sway. The doctrines, the precepts, and example of Christ, are the means of forming a true Christian; there our study and our conversation ought to be, if it be any concern with us, whether we shall do honour to the name we bear, and whether we shall act up to the design of God in sending such an instructor and pattern into our world. Unfurnished with the habitual knowledge, and with the spirit, which continually presents itself to a Christian, is it any wonder that the temptations of the world are too strong for us; and that, as nothing of a serious and higher nature occupies our thoughts, we should be found to live for no other purpose than the gratifications and delusions of the present life? Is it a want of charity to say, that many of us perhaps hold no converse with God, nor

give the principles of our religion admission to our thoughts, more than such a place as this obtrudes upon us? To a considerable part of us, the half of this stated service is quite enough; and I will leave it to themselves to say, how their minds are employed, while this little pittance of their time is given to the appearance of their religious interests. Now, if this be all that is requisite, religion truly is a very easy acquisition; its rewards are far beyond any price that we pay for it; and our state of trial may rather be said to be a state of play and trifling. But even, if we made the most of public edification, no Christian was ever perfected here. The foundation may be laid, but, if the building ever rise into proportion and strength, it must be carried on at home and abroad; and in the closet, and in the world, the New Testament must be present in all its elevating truths, in all its sanctifying precepts, in all its animating promises, in all its persuasive examples,
before

before Christianity become his familiar companion and guide.

Let me commend it to you then, if you would not incur the disgrace both here and hereafter, of dishonouring the worthiest name and the most glorious profession, to give more attention to it; and to consider the temper and the life of a Christian as no improper companion to carry with you into all your commerce with the world. If in all the beguilements of life we would not forget our duty, we must not forget the source from which this duty springs, but give it possession both of our heads and of our hearts. If we find it not within us, the world assuredly will not exhibit it without us; and we shall have no present help to support us, when we stand most in need of one. This is at the bottom of all the disgrace which Christianity suffers; and if we wish to recover it, in ourselves at least, to its deserved credit, and to secure to ourselves that peace and hope which wait upon the worthy professor, we must

be more acquainted with it, and more familiar with its animating and invigorating spirit. And with this determination be assured, that it will continually gain upon you; that you will find in it nothing but what is practicable and pleasant; that it will conquer your affections as well as your judgment; that it will teach you the rare art of reconciling this world with the next; and, for all the sacrifices it requires of you, nobly compensate by that self-possession, that serenity, that cheerfulness, that good-temper, and that true sociability, which it will infuse into all your joys; while in that piety, which is the peculiar virtue of the soul that connects you with God, and gives its highest lustre as well as stability to every virtue, you will find a constant and delightful support, which the mere children of the world never experience.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

MARK XVI. 6.

*Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified;
he is risen, he is not here.*

THE resurrection of Christ is one of the most important facts in the history of the New Testament. If it be true, the religion of Christ stands upon a firm foundation, which not all the malice of its enemies can overturn. But, if false, then is it in vain to use any endeavours to support it; for, as St. Paul observes, if Christ be not risen, then is our faith vain, and we are yet in our sins. We are thrown back into the state in which the Gospel found

found us, without those peculiar aids, encouragements, and consolations, which alone could raise us above the power and relieve us from the terrors of sin.

To do full justice to such a subject would far exceed the limits of a single discourse. It would be necessary to state the evidence of our Saviour's resurrection in all its force, and to obviate the objections which have been made thereto, both at the time of the transaction, and by unbelievers of any later period. Leaving, however, the argumentative for the practical, and taking it for granted, that you have no doubt of a fact so well attested, and that the fallacy and futility of the objections, which have been urged against it, are so exposed to you, as to leave you in no danger of any ill impressions from them; I cheerfully address to you the religious and moral uses of this interesting fact; the lessons which it speaks to us as men and as Christians.

1. It must be rejoicing to the heart of every Christian, that a fact, which involves in it the whole truth of his religion, and every thing which renders his religion dear to him, approaches him with an evidence, which no mind, open to conviction, can resist. This evidence, in the plain and artless history of the evangelists, rises, in a beautiful and orderly succession, to a full and perfect demonstration of its truth. It received its last confirmation from the immediate success which attended the preaching of the apostles, from the wonderful revolution which this great event so rapidly produced in favour of a crucified Saviour, and on the minds of that very people, who had expressed so insulting a joy at his condemnation and death. This triumph over the most obstinate prejudice, this progress in the face of every difficulty, which the world could present, is utterly against human nature, if the fact had not been too notorious, to admit of doubt or contradiction.

tion. In the apostolic history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ appears to be admitted, alike by the enemy as by the friend of this divine messenger. This is strongly witnessed in the conduct of the Jewish Sanhedrim to the two apostles, Peter and John, whom they had summoned to their tribunal. The apostles proclaim to the rulers of the Jews the fact which they gloried in, that the Christ, whom they had crucified, had been raised by God from the dead; and that the stone, which had been set at nought by them, was become the head of the corner. The malice, which had persecuted their Master, was not appeased; but this astonishing and unexpected event had wrought a wonderful change; the Sanhedrim, however ill disposed, durst not enter into the discussion of the fact, lest it should bring into more open view a truth which they hated, and which they wished, if possible, to die in silence and oblivion. They hope to awe them into silence; they dismiss them with the injunction of silence on the subject

Subject of Jesus Christ, and to this injunction the apostles boldly refuse compliance. If in the Jewish rulers this be the conduct of conscious truth and right; if in the humble followers of Jesus Christ, this be the part of men engaged in a lie and known imposture; human nature is changed since that period, and the characters of truth and falsehood are utterly inverted. The apostles appear decidedly to have felt the solid ground on which they stood; to be assured that they spoke what all knew; and that as this glorious interposition of God, in the moment of their lowest despondency, had raised themselves above all fear, so the proclamation of this triumphant truth would render almost every heart accessible to them. — And this truth has prevailed. As the resurrection of Jesus Christ was to himself a triumph over his insulting enemies, so the evidence of this resurrection has been the triumph of his religion over all the forms of superstition, which enslaved mankind. Here Christianity takes her last and most

most confident stand; and smiles, benevolently smiles, at every impotent attack. For a dispensation, attended with so extraordinary a transaction, can proceed from no other than the great Author of life; from that Being, who, as he is the first giver of life, alone has power over the grave, can unlock its fetters, and, to promote the wise purposes of his providence, stand revealed in such a striking act of his power.

2. We may rejoice in the triumph which a glorified Saviour has, by his resurrection to life, acquired over death; and over that unjust offence, which his death afforded to men of contracted minds; minds incapable of extending their views to other interests than the prosperity of this life, to any better, to any nobler world than this. The doctrine of Christ would not have been dishonoured by his persecution and death, though he had not been raised from the grave; as he would not have been the first innocent victim to the evil passions of men;
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not the first, whom a generous zeal to promote the everlasting interests of truth, and a manly rational piety, had rendered unacceptable to an ignorant, corrupted, and superstitious world. The same wisdom of the divine providence, which permits other martyrs to bleed in his cause, and grants a short-lived triumph to the tyrants and oppressors of good men, might have left to a future decision the cause of his much-injured Son; and to the world, the judging of his mission by the truth and excellence of the doctrines which he taught, corroborated by those miracles, which in the course of his ministry he had performed. His doctrines would not therefore have been the less true, the less worthy of belief, less interesting to the present conduct and future hopes of men, less worthy of God to deliver by him as his messenger, and of man to receive. Indeed, it is an ill-grounded veneration that we pay to success, when we consider the enemies who are opposed to truth and goodness in this world; how rarely

rarely the best of men have found a favourable reception from their fellow-creatures ; and that the merits of a cause are to be sought for in the cause itself, not in its outward triumph and prosperity. It is, and ever will be matter of serious concern to the wise and good, that the wretched interests and passions, which sway the greater part of human creatures, should prove so unfriendly to the best benefactors of their race ; should so often involve them in the difficulties and pressures of life, and not unfrequently subject them to persecution and death as the test of their integrity. But, however hardly and wickedly the hand of power may deal with them, however insensible and ungrateful the unthinking multitude may be to their wise and kind instructions ; they, who judge by other rules than the event, will acknowledge the wisdom and benevolence of their conduct, and hold their memories the more endeared and venerated for their glorious steadfastness in the cause

of

of truth and virtue, and for the generous sacrifice which they have made thereto.

Yet, though we are not to question the wisdom of God in the present triumphs of vice and oppression, it becomes us to be thankful for every instance of his condescension to our perverseness, for every deviation from the ordinary course of nature in the support of truth and goodness. The interpositions of a particular providence may be more frequent than we are aware of, though not always marked with the visible finger of the Agent. But, in so great and general a cause as the dispensation of Christianity, the most striking manifestation of the divine concurrence is worthy of the august Ruler of the universe; and every good mind, persuaded of the truth of the Christian mission, and of its fitness to answer the views of a moral providence, must rejoice to see the scorn of its enemies returned upon themselves; and the innocent victim, whom they had hunted to death, vindicated by God, who, for wise and bene-

volent ends, was pleased to permit their short-lived triumph.

3. As there is a sense in which the death of Christ is justly considered as a sacrifice for sin, and the only sense in which I think the Scriptures ever consider it, viz. as being in consequence of that exceedingly degenerate and sinful condition of mankind, from which his mission was designed to rescue us; so his resurrection was a proof, that this sacrifice was permitted by a benevolent God. The more it exhibits Jesus Christ as dear to God, the more does it manifest the extent of the divine good-will and mercy to our race; in permitting him to die in our cause, as the last act of his benevolent mission to our world. Jesus Christ was no private martyr; it was not fit that he should be unheeded and forgotten amidst the many, who, in the ordinary course of providence, are suffered to be sacrificed to the ignorance and wickedness of men. His was a public, an universal cause; his

his death a public, an universal offering to the guilt of the world; to that guilt, which rendered them obnoxious to an offended Deity, and, in this obnoxious state, intended to signify the most important lessons to man; viz. that man and God might yet be reconciled; that the benevolent compassion of God embraced this reconciliation, while his wisdom and holiness provided the fit and worthy medium of it; in fine, that God would not be unpropitious to the hopes of the humble and penitent, and that remission and pardon of sins might be pleaded by them in the name of his Son. If it be an unspeakable comfort, to frail and sinful man, to know that mercy which we all stand so much in need of, to have a medium held out us, by which we may have access to the God whom we have offended; how important is it to have a verification, under the hand of God, that this tender of mercy does indeed proceed from him; that this medium is the one which he hath appointed.

ed.* Had he, who came in the name of the Saviour of the world, fallen to the grave as other sufferers do, without any attestation after such a triumph of his enemies, that he was still the beloved of the Most High ; that he was the offering which God was pleased to surrender to the good of our world, the price at which he was pleased to purchase the reconciliation of alienated man, and that the death of so inestimable a personage, was an affecting demonstration of the parental tenderness of God to our race ;——it might have been thought that Jesus Christ was at length disowned and rejected by that God whose mercy he proclaimed, and that the resignation of his life was no manifestation of this mercy : at least, his death being no way distinguished from the ordinary fate of martyrs to truth and virtue, it would have

* The writer intends nothing more by the term *medium*, than that sincere repentance, that renovation of heart and life, which is the condition of the divine mercy, tendered to us in the Gospel.

conveyed

conveyed to us no distinguished lesson. It would not have proclaimed a more than ordinary cause under the government of God, or that he was a victim in which God had a more than ordinary interest. But the raising him from the grave, and with the same body which had been humbled and broken, without suffering the corruption of the grave to reach it, was a striking departure from the ordinary course of providence; it signified, if any thing can do, that he was no common sufferer; that he was related, endeared to God, more than in the way of human nature; that for no common ends God had permitted the sacrifice of his life; that nothing but an abhorrence of sin, and a predominant mercy to the human race, could have suffered such a scene of ingratitude, violence, and cruelty, to be completed in the person of him, whom, by his glorious resurrection, the Almighty declared himself so peculiarly to delight in.

Say then, is it no matter of humble joy to us, who know the lesson of his death, that pardon from the throne of God is proclaimed thereby; is it not matter of well-grounded joy to be assured, by this interposition of heaven in his resurrection, that the victim was still eminently dear to God, and that the gracious comfort which his death proclaims to us is true? He, who believes in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, can have no doubt of every truth, which his death was intended to signify. And they are truths which are deduced by no arbitrary construction of ours; Jesus Christ himself, whom God redeemed from the grave, is the author of this construction; the prophets, who had predicted his death, intimate the same application of it; and his apostles, whom the same God had enabled to succeed in his ministry, confirm the important lesson which his death teaches. The benevolent, the propitious, the merciful character of God, is the most important doctrine of religion; it is that which introduces

introduces God to our hearts; which, while it is worthy of God, is accommodated to human frailty and imperfection; which repels despair, provokes repentance, awakens the better spirit of man, and leads to that true atonement, which it becomes the very holiness of God to accept, and which the contemplation of a father, an affectionate, forgiving, and merciful father, is so fitted to produce in the human mind. The glorious resurrection of Christ is a demonstration to our world, in the most critical moment, how dear this personage was to God; and the permitting him to die in our cause as the last finishing act of his benevolent mission, and by his very death to answer other salutary purposes of the highest moment to man, is a demonstration of the divine regard, compassion, and tenderness to our race, which comes home to the heart, and produces that determinate effect, which all the abstract truth of the Gospel might perhaps have been unequal to.

Without the accumulated evidence which Christianity produces of God, in all the endearing character of a father, human nature would be apt to contemplate God with no other sentiment than awe, perhaps with terror. This awful and repelling view of God has in every age been the great parent of superstition, and has compelled the affrighted spirit of man to take refuge in her immoral bosom. That it is the tendency of human nature to fall into this dangerous error, is witnessed by the triumph of Heathenism through a long series of ages; and the relapse of Christians, in defiance of the mild and propitious doctrine of the Gospel, into all the gloomy character of the Heathen superstition. The Roman Catholic and the Calvinist do not, cannot love God, because God appears in no form of grace and love to them. All their affectionate devotion is rendered to the Virgin, to a tutelary Saint, or to Jesus Christ; whom they contemplate in the form of humanity, and with all the weaknesses and partial

partial affections of human nature. To *their* favour they hope to recommend themselves by other services than what the awful sanctity of the supreme Being would require; and under their protection they shelter themselves from the terrors of the Almighty. Nor does the philosophic infidel appear to acknowledge God under any other character; so nearly do infidelity and superstition approach to each other. A most celebrated philosopher of our age and country has laid it down as a general position, that the idea of God is so necessarily accompanied with awe and terror, as renders it impossible that he should be the object of love to the human mind. In fine, without the encouragement which the doctrine and the person of Jesus Christ afford to us, the dejected spirit of man would not perhaps be able to raise its eye up to God as a father; nor contemplate in him that moral mercy, which is so essential to all pure, and generous, and virtuous, religion. And this important view of God is brought home to
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our very feeling, when we behold so dignified a personage, and so dear to God as Jesus Christ was, committed to suffering and death in our cause. The interest of man with God rises in proportion to the interest of Christ with God.

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

MARK XVI. 6.

*Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified;
he is risen, he is not here.*

IN indulging to the view of the divine placability and mercy, as inferred from the resurrection of Christ, my mind is insensibly led to other reflections, which, with a sincere love of truth, and useful truth, I lay before you.

Before Christianity appeared, no religion had represented God in that lovely view of mercy; which, while it is certainly not inconsistent with the more venerable perfections

tions of the Deity, does really the best accord with the divine holiness, because it the best accords with the whole moral form of the human mind. In order therefore to produce all the views of God in the dispensation of Christianity, there might be required a more exalted mediator than a mere man. This might be required in more views than we are at present capable of entering into; at least, it becomes not our limited knowledge to maintain the contrary position, or to say *a priori* that the beneficent scheme of Christianity might be completely answered by the mediation of a human being. God, who designed the form of the human mind, knows best in what way, and by what means and instruments, to act upon the mind of man with the most power and efficacy. The human mind also does itself reply, that the more dignified the messenger, with the more reverence and submission is the message received; and that the commission of Jesus Christ is not beneath the dignity of the
most

most exalted personage. But as the compassion and mercy of the Supreme Being is the distinguishing doctrine of the New Testament, which separates it from all other systems of religion, and from which, by its application to the human mind, the salutary effects of the Gospel must be most effectually derived; it might appear to the divine mind to be of great consequence, that this truth should be exhibited in every form that addressed itself to the nature of man; in the most touching and affecting, as well as the most striking and convincing form.—Now let the appeal be made to the human heart: Can any display of the divine tenderness and mercy to our race be more touching, be more fitted to stir every generous affection in us, than that God should commission a high personage from the world of spirits, on the endearing errand of effecting our recovery to him? Grace is the character of the New-Testament dispensation; but then it is a grace that wins to holiness, that puts in motion every

every moral affection of man. It cannot therefore too much lay itself out in a virtuous appeal to the heart. God, in sending a heavenly messenger, has acted up to the extent of his own grace, and has conformed the methods of his grace to human nature. He was himself always reconciled to man, and with this reconciled mind he spared not his beloved Son, if thereby he might reconcile and win to himself the alienated heart of man. Whatever part therefore in the scheme of our redemption is peculiarly expressive of the divine grace, and applies to the better nature of man, ought not to be pronounced to be unnecessary, to be superfluous, or to be unworthy of God or man. — The New Testament does certainly speak of Jesus Christ in highly exalted terms; in terms, that are hardly applicable to human nature; that, without very harsh metaphor and figure, cannot be reconciled with the idea of a person who commenced his existence on earth. This representation of the person of Christ is not
abhorrent

abhorrent to the wisdom and goodness of God, nor to the best disposition of human nature, nor to the spirit and character of the christian religion; it accords with them all. The mercy of God is in itself the loveliest attribute of God; but mercy in the whole christian scheme operates as the powerful instrument of the divine holiness in subduing man to God, in working a regeneration of his virtuous will. Wisdom and truth also act their full part in our redemption; but grace pleads their cause with man, and reconciles their sober and dignified maxims to the heart. And this grace comes home to every sense and feeling, when, in the Minister of our redemption, we behold a rank and character above our kind. If Scripture really suggests the idea of this superior rank and character, the human mind rejoices to meet it, and the application is unavoidable. The more exalted is the mediating personage, and the more dear to God, in the more endearing view does it exhibit the condescending goodness of God; the more touching picture
does

does it exhibit of God as our true Father. Our sense of the interest which we have with God does and must rise in proportion to the dignity and interest of the messenger.

With this view of the Mediator, the whole New Testament appears to be one harmonious system; we enter into all its modes of expression; we see how the reconciliation, the regeneration, the sanctification of man, are specially produced by the death and blood of Christ; we perceive the high price at which God has redeemed us, the invaluable ransom in his precious blood, which was paid for us; and the language of the apostles appears to be no overstrained and harsh imagery, but the naturally ardent expression of gratitude and affection, the natural allusion to the prominent facts and circumstances which excited their highest gratitude and affection.—If we are wrong in applying this supposed character of our Lord, as a very endearing argument of the divine love, and a peculiar motive to an affectionate and dutiful reception of the messenger, we are at least vindicated

vindicated by the general reasoning of Jesus Christ himself. In his parable of the Vineyard and the Husbandmen, he represents the Lord of the vineyard as sending at last his Son and Heir. Ordinary messengers had been rejected; he hoped that they would reverence his Son. Jesus Christ in this parable adopts the same sentiments of what would be wise in God, and what would be fitted to act with power on the human mind, that I have supposed in the whole of my present argument.

With this digression, if indeed it be a digression, let us return to the general object in view, the notice of those useful lessons, which we may infer from the resurrection of our Lord.*

VOL. I.

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* All that the author here intends is to repell those arguments *ex absurdo*, which the advocates of the Socinian scheme are pleased to suppose to be so formidable an objection to the pre-existence of our Lord; and to shew that there are no reasons of antecedent fitness and propriety, whether we contemplate God or man, why we should reject

In addition to what has already been inferred as the lesson of this important fact, —

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a joyful proof of a God of righteousness; it is

an

just the doctrine of a pre-existence, if this doctrine be the first and most obvious interpretation of Scripture.

It is acknowledged perhaps by all, that the language of the New Testament, in its plain and literal construction, is most agreeable to the doctrine of a pre-existent Being, sent into our world in the person of Jesus Christ. Now the first inducement to the adoption of the Socinian scheme, is a presupposed idea that such a personage is unnecessary, and therefore could not proceed from God. Thus prepossessed, a secondary interpretation of the language is resorted to. The author does not say, that this secondary interpretation is inadmissible; he thinks that Christianity stands upon exceedingly good grounds with either interpretation; but the former more meets his own mind, more harmonizes with his best conceptions both of God and man. He concludes therefore, that if the plan of divine wisdom be, on the former supposition, more worthy of God, more consonant to the spirit of the Gospel, and more adapted to the form of the human mind, there appear to be no wise reasons for departing from the plain and more obvious interpretation of the language of the New Testament.

The Socinian scheme, as opposed to Athanasianism, that monstrous imposition of human wickedness on human weakness, appears in a very respectable light. In this contest the victory is easily won; here Socinianism feels,

an evidence to the senses of men of that reward, which righteousness may promise to itself from the Being who delights therein. The consolation of human fears, and the encouragement of reviving goodness, is derived from the mercy and placability of God; but of all the valuable uses of this important fact, if I could allow myself to distinguish any one as peculiarly rejoicing to a virtuous and good mind, as subliming the spirit of virtue, and raising it above the world; this I should lay my hands on, as dear to his heart, and a singular exhibition of the divine grace to man. Without such a clear and undoubted hope in God, what a discouraging world is this to all who love the ways of fair simplicity, of equal justice, of kind-hearted friendship, and free liberality, and mild compassion in their commerce

feels its advantage, and is proud of exposing its dejected foe. I hope that I love truth, and have honestly sought it; but I have never yet discovered in proper Socinianism one distinguished feature of wisdom, or grace, or excellence, as opposed to a tempered Arianism.

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with

with men. Alas! even with all our hopes, the world affords but an affecting view to him, who enters not into its corruptions; who, with all the feelings of one that must act his part therein, looks upon its dark and troubled face. I could employ all my time in delineating the ungrateful picture; something softened indeed by the humane and moral spirit of our religion, but in little proportion to what such a religion might have been expected to effect. Well may such a religion disclaim this world, though it be addressed to the inhabitants of it and find its first subjects therein; but that, which has been, is, and I fear ever will be, the prevailing spirit of this world, cannot mix with the spirit of Christianity. This unnatural union has indeed been attempted, too often attempted; but fatal has the issue always been, the utter debasement of the religion itself; and, as the consequence of so unnatural an alliance, establishing the reign of a more horrible darkness and wickedness than the world would of itself have inclined

inclined to. Thus thought our Lord himself; and therefore, in a spiritual sense, he calls his disciples out of this world; as that character, which intitles them to be his, could enter with no passion into its interests, and must fly with abhorrence from its vices.

Indeed, to a mind possessed with virtuous sentiments, longing for peace and love, and casting its eye on the scenes of disorder, riot, injustice, fraud, violence, oppression, and cruelty, which are ever acting on this stage; how natural to cry out,
' Who will shew me the harbour where my
' offended and dejected spirit may find repose. Oh! that one of those departed
' souls, who have suffered in a good cause,
' who have resisted the proud insolence of
' corruption, and preserved themselves from
' the defilements of the world, would break
' the silence of the grave; and tell me, from
' his own experience, that there is a God
' who looks not with unconcern on the
' perverseness of men; who consigns not

‘ to oblivion his few faithful friends, but re-
‘ wards the faithful, the virtuous, the un-
‘ corrupted part which they have acted, in
‘ a better world; in a world prepared for
‘ and accommodated to those, who in a
‘ trying station have proved their fitness for
‘ it. — To the everlasting joy and triumph
of virtue, the grave *has* spoken this glorious
truth; there is such a God; and the most
distinguished of virtuous sufferers displayed,
in his own person, the reward which awaits
the steady adherent of virtue in the world
beyond. Because he loved righteousness
and hated iniquity, because he gave him-
self for the sins of men, and to restore the
lost empire of truth, piety, and goodness,
endured the cross, and the shame thereof;
therefore has his God raised him in glory
from the grave, shewn him in his triumph-
ant estate to his dejected but still faithful
followers, and in his example proclaimed
to our world that encouragement, which
desponding afflicted virtue sighs for.

Welcome

Welcome it then, ye sons of truth, of integrity, of peace, of benevolence, and pure religion! Ye are no longer exposed on a troubled sea, the unfriended buffet of opposing winds and waves. The storm may rage, but a harbour is in view: your Leader directs your way: he has measured the same course, and through the same difficulties has reached his deserved reward. The same God, who blessed him, presides over you in all your conflicts and dangers; he waits only the same well-principled perseverance in the part which he has assigned to you; the same unbroken faith, the same affectionate trust in him, to reward it with the same liberality.

O our God, we thank thee for this condescension to our weaknesses and fears. Animated by this example of thy love of righteousness, we will not be dismayed by the opposition and discouragements of this world. We will look with more complacency on its ruffled scene; it is the world wherein thy wisdom and benevolence have

been pleased to appoint our present being; it is our place of trial, not of reward; and it is thine to call us hence, when our part herein is acted; thy will be done. We thank thee for the spirit thou hast given us; for every virtuous affection of our souls; for the ample discovery, which, by this glorified Redeemer of fallen man, thou hast made of the things that thou art pleased with; for the example of his life, of his death, of his resurrection from the grave, of his exaltation to the world of reward and blessedness. Assist us to support the character of his disciples, of his followers; to preserve ourselves unspotted from the world; to cultivate thy holy image; to profit by all the instruction and example of our guide: assist us to meet temptation; to bear away the victory, however hardly earned, from ourselves, and from all our enemies: assist us, O our God, to do this; and drop the curtain when thou plearest.

After this, what other uses does the resurrection of Christ minister to us, which
can

can deserve our attention? Indeed, whatever remaining instructions may yet be derived from it, are but distinct views or branches of this general doctrine; of the moral providence of God, and a righteous retribution, which we have seen to be so illustriously inculcated thereby. Of this class is the revelation of another world.

Jesus Christ in his own person exhibited to the eyes of men the reality of that great doctrine, the resurrection from the grave; a doctrine, so essentially interwoven with his whole religion, and giving force and efficacy to all his commands. Death is in truth an awful spectacle to uninstructed and unsupported nature; in every trophy of this great destroyer we behold the melancholy ruin of a noble building, the sad presage of what we ourselves must submit to. Nature is shocked at the view, and turns away its eye as from a scene horrible to all its feelings. To think that this beautiful, this elegant and commodious fabric must cease to be animated, must be tossed
away

away from the face of the world as a thing offensive to its surviving fellows, and after becoming a mass of foul corruption be returned to and lost in the womb of its parent earth; to fear lest its finer inhabitant should share the same destruction, and with all its wonderful powers perish in the violent conflict; nor ever again know itself, but be committed to everlasting silence and oblivion, as though it had not been, nor formed one pleasing connection in the universe of God. Oh death! it is no little effort to bear up against the terrors of thy approach; to meet thee, without being utterly thrown down.

To conquer this last and worst-looking enemy of our kind, is the noblest triumph of our religion. Yes! it is to Jesus Christ, who hath led captivity captive, and bound death in chains; it is to Jesus Christ we owe it, that even in the moment of our lowest humiliation, when we lie prostrate before his power, we can ask this insulting

ing foe, where is now thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?—Thanks be to thee, thou merciful Father of thy creatures, that thou hast granted to weak trembling man, the victory over this fell destroyer, through the triumph of our glorious Leader! No reasonings from thy nature and government, or from the unequal distributions of this life, though glorious aids to so reviving a hope, could come with full comfort to our anxious souls which shudder at the thought of dissolution. There needed an example of one, who having tasted death, exhibited the renewal of life to the eyes and senses of men, in order to bring this interesting truth, which the soul of man clings to, home to his inmost feelings, and dispel every misgiving apprehension. This desired example was exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ: it is no longer thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead, or that it should be a grace beyond the intention of his providence to man. The dead was raised; and expressly,

expresly, as the promise, as the first fruit of that resurrection, which awaits us all.

Then welcome death in whatever form : it cannot come in a more awful form than it presented itself to the Redeemer of the world. But, awful as it was, what comparison can be made between the sufferings of this present life and the glorious exaltation of our Leader. However it may seem fit to thee, thou wise Arbiter of the universe, to try us, let us meekly submit to thy will ; still rejoicing that our Redeemer liveth, and that the fetters, which through thy power he brake asunder, cannot withhold us from the bounty of our God.

Let us pause under these reflections, and dispose our minds to receive their best impression.

How perfect in every view is the scheme of our religion ! how worthy of God, and accommodated to all the just wishes of his creature, man ! how satisfactory is the evidence of its truths ! how salutary are these truths ; how conducive to sanctity and
goodness ;

goodness; how rejoicing to sanctity and goodness, when acquired!

Exult not then, ye worldly souls, who can see nothing great but in what is temporal; who laugh at the idea of a crucified Saviour, and deride a kingdom which reserves its displays of triumph to the invisible world. Though deferred, this kingdom will come, in all the majesty of power; and kings and conquerors, those idols of your foolish adoration, shall bow to its decrees. The merit, which you now deride, shall be the only recommendation to its favour; and affronted, persecuted virtue, shall lift her head up under its smiles, and, in a world well fitted to her reward, enjoy her day of triumph.

With such a crown in view, it is however fit that we should win it, before we wear it. Let us not then murmur at the trial which God may appoint us here; or envy the short-lived prosperity of those, who pursue the fading glories of this transitory state, and lord it with unpitied severity

verity over those who enter not into their low-minded views. Opposed to the prospects of a christian, the sons of this world are the true objects of pity ; while the un-deviating friend of truth, of piety and virtue, has made a wise and prudent choice, which shall gloriously approve itself in the day of universal trial. Set before this hope, the little differences of this little pittance of existence are absolutely nothing ; its unevennesses are smoothed, and all its difficulties are incentives only to a virtuous magnanimity. We thank thee, God, that thou hast kindled this glorious hope in our bosoms, as a natural instinct ; and that thou hast confirmed it by the example of him, whom, for the instruction and encouragement of thy creatures, thou hast raised from the grave ; whom thou hast appointed as the conductor of all virtuous spirits to life, to glory, and to happiness.

I shall conclude with this excellent meditation of a very excellent man.

Why

‘ Why should I seek the living among
‘ the dead? My Lord is not here, he is
‘ risen, and gone back to the Father; nei-
‘ ther is my happiness here. And why
‘ then should my heart be, where I cannot
‘ hope to find my Saviour, nor my felicity?
‘ It is in yonder world that my Redeemer
‘ hath his abode; there are the spirits of
‘ just men made perfect; there God unveils
‘ his glorious face; there my soul hopes to
‘ have its mansion after death; and thither
‘ at the resurrection, my body will natu-
‘ rally ascend. Where then, but in that
‘ happy glorious world should my best af-
‘ fections dwell? Oh! let me not be a
‘ stranger to the thoughts of heaven!
‘ While I sojourn in this vale of tears, this
‘ often unequal, wretched and sinful world,
‘ let me be longing and preparing for my
‘ heavenly home, where all tears shall be
‘ wiped away from my eyes, the light of
‘ life break in upon them, and peace, and
‘ innocence, and joy, shall be my portion
‘ for ever.’

S E R M O N

SERMON XI.

THE HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF JUDAS.

MATT. XXVII. 3, 4, 5.

Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and Elders; saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

O WICKED and wretched man! to be at once the disciple, the confidant, and the betrayer of thy Lord and Master! by one atrocious deed to become abandoned of God, detested by man, and an insupportable burthen to thyself! Hor-

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rible,

rible, and yet affecting is thy story! every generous heart revolts at thy treachery, and glows with indignation; yet humanity relents, and feels some compassionate movement towards thee on the last dreadful close of thy life.

These sentiments cannot be singular. They must be excited in almost every breast by the crimes and end of this son of perdition. His guilt indeed was great to excess; it was peculiarly marked with those aggravations of guilt, which the generosity of the human heart is the most shocked with. Perfidy is in every instance and degree of it detestable to man; but the perfidy of Judas is accumulated with reproach, and execrable beyond example. It was perfidy under the mask of friendship; perfidy with a full conviction of the innocence and worth that was betrayed; perfidy heightened by hypocrisy and ingratitude; perfidy springing from the vilest source, a sordid covetousness; perfidy in a cause peculiarly sacred to truth, to virtue, and religion, to all

all that can be conceived to be great and good under heaven ; perfidy to a Master, in whom he had beheld every quality that could inspire veneration, every virtue that could endear and win upon the best affections of man. From such a motive, to perpetrate so black a deed, deserves that everlasting abhorrence in which the name of Judas is held. Yet such is the make of the human heart, that when the eye is diverted from the crime to the wretchedness of the criminal, pity will insinuate itself, and drop a well-meant though unavailing tear over the fate of this unhappy man.

But to ourselves these mixed emotions are not unavailing. The villain instructs, as well as the good man ; and it is not without its use to posterity, that such examples are held up to its view ; examples, which are so fitted to touch and interest, to call forth, from the deepest cell of the breast, every honest, ingenuous, and virtuous feeling. The character of Judas also illustrates the cause of Christianity, and

bears no inconsiderable testimony to its truth, or at least to its excellence and worth. Yet the friend and the enemy of revelation appear to have passed it by with equal inattention, though less important parts have excited the favourable notice of the former, and less exceptionable parts the reprehension of the latter. For, besides the uses to which I have already observed that the character and conduct of Judas may be applied, there are difficulties in the first view of it; and, as the history of this traitor is generally accepted, difficulties which ought to be repelled if Christianity shall be found to have no proper concern with them. I shall need therefore no farther apology for addressing you on the character and conduct of a man, who acted so conspicuous, though detestable, a part in the history of our Lord.

Let us, first, collect into one view the few materials which compose the history of this false disciple.

It is not easy to say, from what motives our Lord made choice of his disciples,
but

but it is probable, that an inclination to their Lord first manifested itself on their part; and as a temporal Messiah was the favourite hope of the whole Jewish nation, and for a long time obstinately possessed the minds of the apostles themselves, it will not be wondered that such an one as Judas, stimulated by no other than a worldly motive, should insinuate himself into an office, for which he was certainly unfitted, and most probably had never any real inclination. Chosen he was however, did attend upon, and assist our Lord in his ministry, and appears to have been admitted to equal familiarity and confidence with the rest of the twelve. He is enumerated among the twelve, whom Jesus chose out of his more numerous disciples, and whom himself distinguished by the name of apostles. He is again expressly named, when Jesus sent them forth to preach the gospel, and endowed them with extraordinary powers, as the credentials of their divine commission. It is some time before our Saviour

discovers a suspicion of the fidelity of any of his disciples; not, according to the testimony of John who gives the first intimations of it, until the doctrines and miracles of Jesus had spread his fame throughout all Judea, excited the attention of the people, and stirred up the envy and malice of the rulers. In one of his public discourses, when, through a misapprehension of his meaning, many of his followers, offended at the seeming harshness of his doctrine, turned their back, and followed him no more; Jesus, addressing himself to the twelve, said, *Will ye also leave me?* He receives the vows of their unshaken fidelity, but replies, *Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?* This the historian illustrates by observing, that he spake of Judas Iscariot, for it was he that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

In one respect, this disciple was distinguished by a particular office or trust, not, perhaps, ill-suited to the turn of his mind; the little wealth which belonged to this lit-

tle

the society being committed to his charge, and the disbursements for their common wants or charitable benefactions issuing through his hands. This, at least, appears to be what is meant by his bearing the bag or purse; and the same apostle, who has acquainted us with this circumstance, testifies, that this charge had not been very faithfully executed by him; for, the sister of Lazarus, in the overflow of her grateful affection, having, according to the custom of the ancients, anointed the feet of Jesus with some very costly perfumes, Judas rebukes the action from a pretence of compassionate providence for the poor; but, says the Evangelist, it was, *not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag*. The historian, therefore, directly charges him with the betraying of his trust, and infers from thence, that he lusted after the purchase of this valuable ointment, only as the prey of his future dishonesty. Whether it be that his character became suspected, which from the prece-

ding testimony of his fellow-apostle is exceedingly probable; or, that he now despaired to reap those mercenary advantages from his adherence to Jesus Christ, which he at first had promised himself, or that both causes concurred to awaken all the traitor in him; this, at least, is certain, that he shortly after introduced himself to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, who were too ready to receive any infamous proposals which might facilitate their long-meditated malice against the life of a person, whose superior virtues and reputation were a continual torment to them.

Judas engages to betray his Master into their hands, and receives from his employers the hire of his villany. This iniquitous contract being made, he returns to his Lord, who then, for the first time, discovers his knowledge of the person of his betrayer. On the near approach of his last sufferings, he was troubled in spirit, and repeating his former declaration, that one of the twelve, who then sat at supper with him,

him, should betray him ; John, who leaned on his Master's bosom, intreating to know which of them should act this detested part, he gives him a mark by which the individual traitor should be known ; *be it is*, says he, *to whom I shall give the sop, when I have dipped it* ; and immediately giving the sop, he addresses himself to this wretched, wicked man, and bids him execute quickly what he had purposed in his breast. The guilty wretch retires from the penetrating eye of his Master, and stimulated, perhaps, by this discovery of his traiterous intentions, hastens the execution of them ; he quits, for ever, the society, into which he ought never to have entered, receives from the chief priests a band of soldiers, and returning to the well-known retirement of his Lord, delivers him, under the security of night, into the hands of his malicious enemies. While these are carrying on the mock appearance of a trial, and every thing is hastening to the death of the victim ; the conscience of the traitor resumes

resumes its suspended empire of his mind, repentance of the accursed part which he had acted turns upon him, he hurries into the presence of the chief priests, avows the innocence of his Lord, proclaims his own baseness; but, meeting with no sympathetic compunctions in those more hardened monsters, he casts down with indignation before them the sordid hire of his wickedness, and, flying from them, makes a vain effort to fly from himself. In the desperate agony of his mind, he takes the last step of insupportable guilt, by laying violent hands upon his life.*

Such

* The author cannot suffer this sermon to go into the world without acknowledging an error into which our version of the New Testament has led him. This sermon, which was composed twenty years ago, was published in part in the Theological Repository in the year 1771, under the signature of Erastus. During the whole period from that time nearly to the present day, the author entertained no other idea than that Judas had destroyed himself. But in a very late conversation with his ingenious friend Mr. Gilbert Wakefield, he has been fully convinced that our translation is erroneous, and that Judas died of a suffocation from excessive

Such is the history of Judas, his unhappy life, and unhappy end, as recorded by his fellow-apostles. Let us now take a critical view of it, and see whether the enemy or the friend of christianity may most avail himself of it.

It is generally presumed, that the treachery of Judas is one of those facts in the life of Christ, which, being foreknown by God, was revealed to the Jewish nation, amongst the other discoveries of the promised Messiah; and this opinion is found-

cessive anguish of mind, attended with a violent affection of the intestines. Mr. Wakefield has unanswerably shewn in his excellent Commentary on Matthew, that the Greek original admits of this construction, and this construction alone reconciles the account of Matthew with that of Luke in the Acts.

The author has not new-modelled his sermon to this correction, partly because it was communicated too late to have been easily done, but principally because this different view of Judas' unhappy end no way affects the reasoning or the reflections in the sermon, unless at the very close of the discourse, where the reflections on suicide may be received as adapted to the common notion, or as independent on the history of Judas altogether.

ed upon supposed predictions of the traitor, long before the important scene of human redemption was displayed; as well as on the knowledge which Jesus Christ himself discovered of this afflicting circumstance, after he had commenced his ministry, and while this betrayer was numbered amongst his select disciples, and was certainly supposed to be equally faithful and attached to him with any of the twelve. Supposing this opinion, therefore, to be justly founded, it may be asked by the enemies of revelation, if the character of God be herein represented, agreeably to his wisdom and to his goodness? Was it fitting to the divine wisdom, to design the admission of so unworthy an associate, in so good a cause? Does the part of Judas appear to be any way necessary to the scheme of human redemption; and, if necessary, did the foreknowledge of God influence the heart, and determine the conduct of this unhappy man? Must the integrity, the life, the happiness here and perhaps hereafter, of one amongst the reasonable

sonable and moral creatures of God, be sacrificed, by his all-controuling power, to the cause in which his Son was engaged? These are questions of some importance, and which, if no satisfactory answer can be given thereto, may be thought to reflect, not on the moral character of providence, for this is supposed to be without spot or blemish; but on the pretensions of the christian religion, which, deriving itself immediately from God, can yet represent God in a view so opposite to the truth and perfection of his character.—But the whole force of them rests on the supposition, that the part, which Judas would act, was predicted before Judas or his Master made their appearance on this stage of human life, and, therefore, must have been foreseen in all its circumstances by that Being, from whom the prediction proceeded. This is generally supposed, and I confess myself to have been possessed with the same notion, before I had examined the evidences, which alone can authorize the opinion. But, on consulting

sulting the sacred prophecies, I find nothing which carries a sufficient appearance of this supposed prediction.

St. Peter, in his speech to his fellow-apostles recommending the choice of a successor to Judas, refers to two passages in the book of Psalms, as applicable to the fate of that false disciple; but they have no more application to him, than most of the warm and angry imprecations of David against his enemies have. They are simply as follows, *Let their habitation, viz. that of his enemies, be desolate, and let another take his place*; a description so exceedingly imperfect and indefinite, that no one can suppose St. Peter to have meant any more than, in the words of David, to speak his sentiments concerning Judas and the vacancy which his crime had made in the number of the apostles.

The reference which the evangelist Matthew makes to a passage in the prophecies of Zechariah, will, perhaps, be thought something more to the purpose. When Judas,

Judas, in the agony of repentance, had thrown back to his vile employers the purchase of his treachery, the tender-hearted priests, considering that it was the hire of blood, would not return the thirty pieces of silver into the treasury of the temple, but bought therewith the potter's field, as a place of burial for strangers. On which fact the Evangelist remarks, *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet*, but it should have been written *Zechariah*, for in the 11th chapter of that prophet are the words alluded to. The passage is thus quoted by Matthew, *And they, viz. the chief priests, took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.* But the words differ considerably in the original; Zechariah, speaking of himself, says, *I said unto them, viz. to the people of Israel, If ye think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear; so they weighed for me thirty pieces of silver, and the*
Lord

Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prized at of them ; and I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. Now here is no mention of the field, or of any purchase at all being made with the money, nor are they the rulers of Israel who make application of it, but the prophet himself.

Moreover, in the whole chapter, of which these words are a part, it is difficult to make out any strict allusion to the person or history of Jesus Christ, but only a representation of the ingratitude of the Jewish nation to their best benefactors, and of those miseries which this ingratitude would entail upon them as its deserved punishment. After having represented their desolate estate, the prophet is ordered by God to feed the flock of the slaughter; when, alluding to the hire of a shepherd, he demands the price which they were willing to give for his services; but so paltry a sum as thirty pieces being given, the Lord, as resenting their mean and ungrateful parsimony,

mony, bids him throw back the goodly price at which he was prized of them.

This seems to be all that can fairly be collected from the passage; while, if it had really been intended as a prediction of that event which followed the repentance of Judas, and if by the prophet Zechariah, in the character of a shepherd, we must understand the great Shepherd Jesus Christ, and by throwing the silver to the potter, the purchase of the potter's field; yet we must confess, that the indignant return of the money should not have been represented as the act of the prophet himself; much less the application of the money for the purchase of the potter's field, as his act; but the act of those from whom it had been received, and to whom it was returned.

In fine, there is nothing applicable, in the passage, to the fact of which it is the supposed prediction, unless that the precise sum of thirty pieces of silver, and the word *potter*, are spoken of in both. But, saving

the co-incidence of these two circumstances, no explication of the prophet's words can render them at all descriptive of the transaction in Matthew.* In the former, there is no traitor exhibited, no hire of any villany received or returned, but the inadequate reward of a most virtuous and benevolent service, and there is an utter confusion of persons in the prefiguration of the history and the history itself. He, therefore, who, from a too scrupulous regard to what he thinks the sentiment of the apostle, will still insist upon the prophetic application of the passage, may, I think, with almost equal ease and propriety, deduce a prophecy of any fact from any page of any author. But it is more candid (and surely candour is due in the interpretation of every well-meaning author) to suppose, that St. Matthew meant to consider the words of Zechariah, only as bearing some allusion to the fact which he was then reciting; at least, if he intended to apply them in a more important view, it will not
be

beeasy to excuse in the evangelist the liberty he has taken of altering so materially the words and purport of the supposed prophecy.* Nor in this construction am I without the countenance of the most sensible and liberal commentators, who generally agree that many applications of the language of the Old Testament to the events of the New, are thus to be understood.

I can find but one instance where our Saviour himself refers to the language of the Old Testament, as illustrated by the treachery of Judas. In his last conversation with his disciples, he abruptly diverts from the style of instruction, and says, *I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but, that the scripture may be fulfilled, He, that eateth bread with me, hath lift up his heel against me.* Now it cannot, methinks, be imagined by any one, that our Lord intended any thing farther by this reference, than to observe, that the same afflicting cir-

* Merely as an allusion to a passage in a respected author, the liberty is innocent; as a serious appeal to a prophecy, it is subject to a more serious judgment.

cumstance which happened to David, and which he bemoans in the passage alluded to, was ready to be verified in himself. At least I am sure that the original has as little of the air and manner of a prophecy, as the lamentation of the treachery of a friend in any author whatever can have.

This, now, is all that can be made out of any allusion to the history of Judas, throughout the whole of what are generally esteemed to be the prophetic writers; and this very little, in that passage which at first view is the most striking, alludes to no interesting part of his history; while it might have been expected that his treachery would have been prefigured, rather than the unimportant circumstance of the use which the Jewish rulers made of the hire of his villany. There is, therefore, no sufficient reason to conclude, that the character of Judas was at all predicted; nor have we authority from Scripture to say, that the part which he acted, in the last scene of our Saviour's life, was pre-known, or pre-determined by God.

What

What the prescience of the Deity may include is not for man to say, but perhaps we generally ascribe more to it than is consistent with the character of moral and accountable agents. But this is a question which belongs more to natural than revealed religion. It is sufficient to our present purpose, that the Scripture has not supposed the necessity of such a character as that of Judas, by the pre-discovery of that character; and that the difficulty, which we mentioned as springing out of this supposition, falls to the ground with the supposition itself. There is now no more difficulty in accounting for the existence of this traitor, or that one so unfit should be joined as an associate in so good and moral a cause; than for the thousand examples of treachery, corruption, and villany, which we continually meet with in the history of mankind. In this view the objection is removed from christianity, and carried, if any where, to the throne of the Almighty himself, which it is as incumbent on the

enemies as the friends of our religion to answer, and therefore does not properly introduce itself in our present subject.

But it will be urged, that Jesus Christ is represented as knowing who the traitor should be. Why, therefore, did he admit him into the number of his apostles, or, if admitted before the knowledge was imparted to him, why did he not instantly expel him, as soon as the disaffection of his heart, and inclination to the perfidious part which he acted, was revealed?—But may not this question be answered in the same manner as the preceding; for is it so very clear and established a point, that our Saviour was acquainted with the future character of Judas at the time that he elected or admitted him into the number of his constant followers and disciples; or that at any period he was acquainted with the individual person of the traitor before he actually pointed him out? This does not appear from any testimony of our Saviour concerning

cerning him ; nor are we therefore authorised to suppose, that he purposely selected a villain, a determined and devoted villain ;—not with the benevolent hope of touching his heart, and gaining him over to the cause of integrity, of truth, and of virtue ; but—for what ! That he himself might be betrayed by him.

The universal prescience of our Lord is a doctrine which many have taken up, and confidently talk of ; but upon what authority I profess myself to be utterly ignorant, unless it be as a consequence of the still larger supposition, that he is, indeed, the very God himself. Our Saviour does, indeed, on some occasions, appear to be possessed of the more than human faculty of knowing the secret thoughts of men and of being acquainted with many important events in futurity ; but he speaks also of his knowledge being communicated to him from the Most High, and we have his own testimony, that there were some

things relative to his own kingdom, which the Father had not revealed even unto him.

So far, therefore, as was conducive to the great work in which he was engaged, we have reason to suppose, that many special communications from the Father of lights were repeatedly made to him; and what things our Lord actually appeared to have known, these we are authorised to say he did know, but not farther. Among these communications of the divine intelligence, might be the impending treachery of Judas: God, who saw the ripened baseness of that traitor's heart, perhaps the traiterous design already meditated in his mind, might, before the sacrifice of the innocent victim, impart to him the knowledge of this addition to his approaching sufferings—how near the betrayer was to his bosom; how deep, undeserved, and unexpected a stab he should receive from the hand of a friend. At least, it is certain, that our Saviour discovers no apprehension of this treachery, till some time after the
number

number of his disciples had been completed, nor does he himself intimate, that he had been acquainted with it before-hand.

John, indeed, on the first suspicion that our Lord imparted to his disciples of the fidelity of some of them, adds this remark of his own; *for Jesus Christ knew from the beginning, who they were that believed not, and who should betray him*; but neither John, nor any other of the Evangelists, have produced a single assertion of their Master to this purpose. In fine, we are not obliged to suppose, that John was instructed to bear this testimony to his Master's knowledge. He appears to be offering only his own opinion, and collected from the same circumstance in our Saviour's history, which lies open to our judgment also. As the apostles have freely transmitted their own judgment of this matter, it is absurd to suppose, that they would not have authenticated their judgment, by the more important evidence of their Master, if they had ever heard him make such a declaration; and
therefore

therefore it is clear to me that he never did do so.

It does not appear, therefore, that our Lord, knowing the future infidelity and treachery of Judas, elected him into the number of the twelve; or that we have a sufficient authority, from Scripture, to admit this supposition; much less to receive it as a matter of undoubted certainty, and subject ourselves to the difficulty of answering the objections, which spring out of this supposition.

This principal difficulty being removed, therefore, the question why our Lord did not openly detect, and instantly expel from his chosen attendants, so unworthy an associate, as soon as the knowledge of him was revealed, is answered from that very wisdom of our Saviour, which the question would impeach. How would such a treatment have appeared to the world, or even to his disciples themselves, to condemn for a crime, the evidence of which existed only in his own mind? This would have been
to

to assume, not only the knowledge, but the judicial authority of God himself; nay, rather more than God himself does exercise towards delinquents in this world; and would have so reflected on the wisdom, justice, and mildness of his character, as must have afforded the strongest grounds of triumph to the determined enemies of his doctrine in his own day, and to those in every day, who have vainly been endeavouring to find specks and blemishes in his wise and blameless conduct.

Such is the solution which the preceding difficulties have received in my own mind, upon a free and honest examination of all the evidence which the Scripture affords. I have purposely avoided the enquiring, how far the designation of such a character as that of Judas, must be supposed from the universal fore-knowledge of the Deity; because it is purely a question of natural religion, which revelation has no proper concern with. It is sufficient, if the Scriptures shall

shall be found not to have asserted the designation of Judas to the office he held, and the part he acted; and, therefore, have not made themselves accountable for the fitness of such an appointment.

I do not indeed think that it would be any difficult matter for natural religion to reply to this question, if she were allowed to suppose such an idea of the divine prescience, as being consistent with all the natural perfections of God, seems necessary to the character of his moral and accountable subjects.* But Christianity stands

* The power of the Supreme Being is limited by possibility, and all his natural attributes are limited by right. In fine, the perfections of any one of the divine attributes is not to be contemplated singly in itself, but as it harmonizes with the whole. To sacrifice the moral character of God at the shrine of his natural attributes, is to abandon the first principle, and the ultimate end of religion. The prescience of God is not a primary attribute, but springs out of his power and wisdom. If power and wisdom be subservient to a moral plan, prescience must also.—But, after all, we ought not to enquire too far; we are mistaken, if we think to obviate every difficulty, and solve every question in this world. It ought to satisfy us, that as the rectitude and goodness of the

stands opposed to Deists, not to Atheists; and in whatever manner any sincere believer in God can account for the existence of moral evil, and for the admission of the worst of agents in the best of causes; in the same manner may he account for the existence of Judas, and for the admission of such an associate in that benevolent and moral work on which Jesus Christ was sent into the world.

But perhaps a tenaciousness of opinions already received, or a concern for what they may think to affect the honour of God and of his Son, may make some offended with this account; but, ere they take the resolution of not changing their opinions, let them seriously and freely examine upon what foundation their opinions do stand,

the Supreme Being are the most important discovery which can be made of him to us, so they are the most significantly, the most clearly, the most fully presented to our view, particularly in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Assured of these, with humility and modesty to enquire farther, is commendable; but, where enquiry fails, humility and modesty repose in the expected communications of another world.

and

and what that necessity is, which their opinions plead for, to the maintaining the honour of God and of Jesus Christ. Let them first be able to say to themselves and to the public, for what wise and moral purposes God could design, and his Son could elect into an office, a wretch, devoted to act in the greatest possible opposition to the spirit and intention of that office. For my own part, I honestly confess, that I can say nothing to such a question; and I do therefore truly rejoice, that neither revelation nor reason, when fairly consulted, do reduce me to such a difficulty.

SERMON

S E R M O N XII.

THE HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF JUDAS.

M A T T. XXVII. 3, 4, 5.

Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and Elders; saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

HAVING obviated the difficulties which arise, partly, from a misapprehension of some passages in the New Testament which respect the history of Judas; and partly from urging on christianity

anity a question, which it is the province of natural religion to answer, and which every friend of religion in general must answer, or modestly reserve for that more enlightened day, when our faith will be rewarded, and every difficulty of our present state be removed;—

I proceed to some other reflections, which the history of Judas excites.

I have often wondered to what purpose was the treachery of Judas; of what necessity, what advantage to the Jewish rulers, was the part this disciple acted, in order to the facilitating their purposes against the life of Jesus Christ. Judas appears to have done nothing more than barely conduct their officers into his presence; a matter surely of little consequence to those who thirsted after the life of this innocent person, and without which, it may well be supposed, they could equally have perpetrated all their malice against him.

Jesus Christ was not like a malefactor, flying from the terrors of justice, and hiding

ding his guilty head in dark and unknown retreats; in which case, the officious hand, that conducted his pursuers to his lurking place, might be the very thing that was wanting to bring him to punishment. He had never practised any concealment; he appeared every day in the face of the public, in their streets, and in their temples, assiduously carrying on the work, for which he had come into the world, and which alone provoked all the vengeance of his enemies. He stood exposed to their arrest at any time, whenever they should resolve upon it; nor even, if they should think it more convenient to seize him at night, is it credible, that the places of his retirement could be any mystery, where no mystery appears to have been intended, and was perhaps impossible to have been effected? The number of his disciples, who generally, if not constantly attended him, was too great to be concealed, and his regular appearance in public, during the day, must have ren-

dered it a very easy matter, to trace him to his abode, during the night.

It is farther a very material circumstance, that his nightly retreat appears to have been generally the same; for it is expressly mentioned, that the place to which Judas conducted the band, who seized his Master, was that of his usual resort by night with his disciples, and that it was the very circumstance which led Judas to seek him there; it could hardly, therefore, have been unknown to many in Jerusalem, at least there could have been no difficulty in discovering it to those who were interested in effecting the discovery.—It does not appear, therefore, that the single part, which Judas took in the iniquity of his Master's enemies, had any sufficient, any important, any necessary end in view. May we not then conclude, that this traitor was designed by his employers to have acted a still farther part, and had himself intended to have appeared a more considerable actor, in the transactions of the succeeding day, if his sudden

sudden and unexpected repentance had not defeated the design?

It would have been a great point gained, in order to support the appearance of disinterested justice, and turn the popular prejudice against him, if one of his own disciples should stand forth his accuser, and give testimony to the supposed crimes, which they meant to allege against him.

The chief priests and elders accused him, to the Jewish nation, of a design against their religion, a design to overturn it from the foundation, and even to destroy that sacred temple, in which they believed all the majesty and distinction of their nation to be lodged; a crime of the highest magnitude to a bigotted and superstitious Jew.

To the Romans they accused him of aspiring and ambitious designs, to attack the sovereignty of the empire of the world, and raise himself to a throne, as soon as he had sufficiently secured the affections and confidence of the people. He might carry himself, indeed, with decency, with sanc-

tity, with humility, and moderation, but this might be urged as only a more deep and subtle hypocrisy; while the general expectation of the people, the flattering title of king which they had conferred upon him, being sufficient to alarm the Roman jealousy, if thereto should be added the testimony of one of his chosen disciples and confidants, who might be supposed to be acquainted with his most secret views, and this testimony affected to be given from a detestation of his criminal designs; then might they hope, and not without reason, to justify their prosecution to Rome and to their country, that every one would give credit to the charge, and join issue in the sentence which should be pronounced against him; while themselves, instead of being detested as the ministers of injustice and oppression, of a low, corrupted and revengeful malice, would be applauded as doing a public service to the civil and religious interests of their nation.

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All this they might hope to derive from the testimony of so material an evidence: their scheme was then well concerted, and the wretched disciple himself, if a traitor, would not be so to no end; but would acquire, at least, with his employers, no inconsiderable merit from his valuable services. But the heart of Judas, bad as it was, failed him ere the completion of his treachery; and the rulers being now engaged in the eye of the public to support their charge against this extraordinary personage, who had so much excited the attention of the whole nation, were obliged to carry it through as well as they could; and, being disappointed in this important evidence, they suborned others to bear the same testimony, which Judas, with more baseness, indeed, but with more credit, was designed to have given.

Nor is it a sufficient objection to this supposition, that the writers of the sacred history have given no intimation of this farther purpose in the treachery of Judas; since, if they had really been acquainted

therewith, yet it is nothing wonderful that they should omit to mention a circumstance, which existed only in intention, and, therefore, contributed nothing to the condemnation and death of their Lord. I say it is nothing wonderful, that they should omit to mention such a circumstance in an history, which they have confessedly written in a very concise and summary way. But it is not necessary to suppose, nor, I will venture to add, very probable, that they were acquainted with the truth of this farther intended treachery on the part of Judas, though, not improbable that they might have the same ideas of the nature of his perfidy that we have suggested. Whatever part Judas was designed to act in the betraying of his Master, it was a private contract between him and the chief of the Jews, which these iniquitous rulers had a manifest interest in concealing from the public knowledge.

This conjecture will, therefore, be allowed to carry a great probability with it,
and

and obviate any objections which may be inferred from the insignificance of Judas' treachery. Had the repentance of Judas not succeeded to the first act of his treachery, it would have been difficult to have accounted for the introduction of so useless a villain ; but the prosecution of what such a villain might farther intend being cut off by the unlooked-for revolt of his own mind, no one is authorised to question the integrity of the sacred historian, upon the supposition that the whole of this false disciple's perfidy is represented in the single act of conducting the enemies of his Master into his presence. The narration of the historian has all the marks of inapprehensive veracity, not of a fiction betraying itself by its own inconsistencies. The evangelist faithfully narrates what Judas did perform ; he seems to apprehend no difficulty in his account, nor to have meditated any answer to what objections might be urged, but the sequel of his history provides the answer ; for it is left to candour

to suppose, what such a beginning of treachery might have produced, if conscience had suffered the traitor to proceed.

But barely to find no insuperable difficulty in the history of Judas is not sufficient: the whole character of this traitor is no inconsiderable testimony to the innocence and uprightness of Jesus Christ, and to the truth of the Christian religion. Judas had no prejudice in favour of the cause in which his excellent Master was engaged; but most probably would have rejoiced, and continued to have been his adherent, if he had found it to be the cause of an impostor; that is, of one who, under the appearance of public spirit, of a zeal for religion and for virtue, aimed only to attract the public notice, to play the part of an artful hypocrite, to flatter the universal prejudice which the Jewish nation had entertained of a temporal deliverer, and on the sanguine hopes and wishes and affections of the people, raise himself to the height of worldly greatness.

Then,

Then, also, this unworthy disciple might have hoped to succeed in the ambitious views which first drew him to join the followers of Jesus Christ; but he found himself deceived: the whole conversation, instruction, and manners of his Master discovered no worldly design, but the most positive renunciation of it; he prophesied nothing of himself at the hands of men, but contempt, persecution, and death; he promised nothing to his disciples but to bear the same cross, to drink of the same bitter cup; the whole breathed the spirit of humility, resignation, and a mind mortified to the views and pleasures of this world, by being wholly occupied with a regard to the sublimer interests of that world which is to come. The sordid earth-born spirit of Judas was shocked with such a discovery; he renounced the cause in which his ambition could find no ground to rest upon, and, like a low-minded villain, endeavoured to derive an advantage from his renunciation; to make a merit and a gain of betraying

traying the Master, of whose uprightness he was sorry to be convinced, into the hands of his malicious enemies.

This appears to be the plain and only account which can be given of the views, wherewith Judas first attached himself to Jesus Christ, continued for a while to appear as his follower, and of the motives which at length determined him to renounce a cause, which he had totally mistaken. — Nor was he the only disciple who mistook the design of the moral Redeemer of the world. The writers of his life plainly enough testify of themselves and of all their fellow-disciples, that they had the same low worldly expectations from their Leader; but a pure disinterested affection to their Master, founded on his wisdom, the virtues of his character, the amiableness of his temper, and a conviction that the favour and power of God was with him, grew up at length in their hearts; and, however shocked at his repeated declarations that his kingdom had no view to this world, but that he should die

die the death of a criminal, yet were they too firmly attached to his person to desert him; and this veneration, this affection for their Lord, gradually prepared their minds to entertain a veneration for those real interests which he had in view, and at length to succeed their Master in the same religious and moral work for which he lived and for which he died.

To say, then, that Judas had no other than an ambitious and worldly view in his attachment to Jesus Christ, is saying little more of him than what we are authorised to say of the whole body of the disciples: but their minds were capable of being enlightened with nobler views, that of Judas was not; they renounced the world, he renounced the cause, and endeavoured, in the way of treachery, to gratify some of those sordid views to which his whole soul was devoted. The desertion of such a disciple from such motives, and who, in the very act of his desertion, discovered so base and sordid a spirit, is, to me at least, a
very

very strong attestation of the upright and good intentions wherewith Jesus Christ shewed himself to the world; of that pure and honest regard which alone he professed to have for the glory of God, and for the souls of men. I lament the fall of Judas, I am truly grieved that a traitor should have been found in so small a band of friends and confidants; but I rejoice to see it clearly proved thereby that an hypocrite, a low-born, mercenary, ambitious spirit, could find no encouragement to continue the friend and confidant of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

But it is not only by the desertion, by the betraying of his Master, that Judas convinces us of the goodness of that cause which he forsook; but, in the sequel, he gives direct and express testimony to the innocence of his betrayed Lord. He gives this testimony in that affecting state of mind which cannot lie, and he sets a fatal but indisputable seal to the truth of his testimony. The worldly views, which had possessed

ferred the minds of the other disciples, were subdued by the incomparable virtues of their Master; the heart of Judas needed the reflexion of the blackest crime, to bring it to any sense of right; he feels not any veneration for his Lord, till, like an assassin, he has stabbed him; a moment he views the irrevocable deed, and conscience flings the injustice, the ingratitude of it in his face; the world and all its vile temptations are extinguished within him; violated truth, injured innocence, stand in awful majesty before him; driven by a black repentance, he hurries into the presence of his detested employers, confesses the horrid part which he had acted, proclaims his Master's innocence and worth, indignantly throws back the hire of his villany, and desperately cuts himself off from a world, the love of which had cut him off from all goodness, and from all happiness.

This is such a testimony, and so confirmed, as methinks is fitted to speak with power to the most prejudiced mind. Assuredly,

surely, the repentant wretch uttered, in that bitter moment, what he felt at his heart, and what he felt he knew; he had seen his Master in private, as well as in public; he had enjoyed his confidence, he was well acquainted with his whole designs; alas! he had found nothing therein but what frowned upon the baseness of his own designs. This disciple, this friend, this confidant of Jesus Christ, whom only the virtues of Jesus Christ had driven to desert and to betray him, proclaims before the rulers of the Jews, *I have sinned; I have betrayed innocent blood*; and, however abandoned to wickedness he may seem in the general view of his character, conscience is at length so awakened in him, that he confirms his testimony, beyond the possibility of doubt, by the desperate evidence of self-murder.

How wisely ordered is the constitution of the human mind, even when viewed in its worst examples! How wonderfully does the providence of God produce good out of the greatest

greatest evils, and compel villains to give testimony to that very cause of truth and goodness, which, from the corruptness of their hearts, they have been endeavouring to destroy.

Let us, however, rejoice in a cause, rejoice in a Master, whose truth and uprightness triumphed at length even over such a mind as that of Judas; and, though the miserable fate of this lost man may excite that pity which is natural to the human heart, yet let us rejoice, that even from him we have an evidence to confirm us in the faith of that divine Teacher, whom Judas betrayed.

Rejoicing in this tribute from so bad a man to the innocence which he betrayed, and the cause which he meant to destroy, let us do that justice to the character even of Judas himself, as to acknowledge, that however great his crime, there yet were, among the perpetrators of the death of Christ, those who appear with a more hardened wickedness. If Judas sinned from a worldly motive against the conviction of his own

own mind, he had all that repentance which the horrors of his conscience rendered possible. He did all that was then in his power to atone for his deed, and to save the innocent Victim of his treachery, by proclaiming openly the iniquity of his conduct, by attesting the innocence and integrity of his Master, by throwing back the hire of his wickedness. But the chief priests and rulers betray no compunction, no relenting. An implacable malice still possesses them; the repentance of an associate stirs in them no kindred feelings; they remain obdurate to the most affecting spectacle of misery. The poor wretch, whom they had hired to be the agent of their malice, stands before them in all the horrors of an alarmed conscience; he endeavours to awaken conscience in them by an open confession of the guilt in which they had largely shared; but they only insult his better feelings, and with all the coldness of practised villany reply, What is that to us? see thou to that. What part thou hast had in this scene,

scene, is now no concern of ours; thou hast so far answered our views in it, it is thine to look to the consequence. — There is something in the spirit of this answer that conveys the idea of these mens' character, and their unalterable hatred to the innocent life which they had long pursued, more than the most minute delineation of their character could convey. One hardly knows which circumstance strikes us most; their harshness and inhumanity to the poor repentant and self-tormented wretch who stood before them, or their obstinacy in a transaction of iniquity and cruelty with regard to Jesus Christ. It was indeed an extremely harsh and hardened reception of Judas himself, who, however he might have deserved at the hand of justice the severest treatment, deserved it not at theirs; nor does even justice insult over the repentant feelings of the very criminal whom it condemns. But, with respect to Jesus Christ, if there were no other circumstance in his whole history which shewed their inveteracy a-

gainst him, maugre all justice and all truth, this would have been sufficient. A principal instrument of their malice comes before them, driven in by the lashing of his own mind, and confesses the vile part which he had contracted with them to act against the life of a most innocent and upright person: but neither this pitiable object, nor the *testimony* he gives to injured innocence, that testimony which he was so well qualified to give, in the least affects them; they discover in their very short reply their immovable determination to lay hold of every advantage, and to pursue every means whereby they might bring the object of their hatred to death. — What could form this difference between them and Judas? Why! to that worldly spirit, which alone triumphed over the integrity of the latter, was superadded in them an habitual attachment to a system of superstitious policy, which seconded all their worldly views, and which they thought to be in the most imminent danger from the innovations of
Jesus

Jesus Christ. Perhaps in all the view of human degeneracy this alone is effectual to harden the heart of man, and make it absolutely callous and unyielding to every moral, to every compassionate impulse. The turbulent passions which belong in general to all human kind, to whatever heights of wickedness they may transport men, do yield to the moral constitution of God, to the benevolent temper of the heart: but a political superstition, a state-religion, has been known in a thousand instances to uproot every moral principle, to undo the whole work of God, and extinguish all remorse and compassion, even in cases of the most excessive injustice, perfidy, and cruelty.

But it may be thought, that, unless we analyse the principles which led to their crimes, the characters both of Judas and of the chief priests are too bad to be applied as a general moral lesson, at least in these more enlightened and humaner times; that their vices are of too great a magni-

tude to be an object of caution almost to any one; and that in addresses from the pulpit it would be an insult to suppose, in any one of our hearers, a capacity of becoming profligate like them. Yes, Christianity has at length acquired this blessed triumph; but she has had many an awful struggle with superstition and worldly policy, before she could secure this peace to her faithful votaries. Other blood than that of Jesus Christ has been shed upon the altar of these malignant demons, and popes and priests and kings have rivalled the infamy of those who plotted and worked the death of our divine Master. Superstition is not even yet expelled from the fields of Christendom; nor ever will, while there are vices among men, to plead her cause; and worldly policy even yet would adopt any instrument which may further her views of domination. That union which Jesus Christ prohibited between religion and the state, is not dissolved; and the peace of conscience is perhaps more indebted

debted to the fear which past experience has inspired of the encroaching and intractable spirit of superstition, than to any natural dislike which the lust of power entertains for her intolerant and persecuting temper. Be the causes however what they will, to which under the direction of providence we owe our rest, and peace, and this ignorance of the savage outrages of former days, it is a blessed change; and God be praised! May religion never again be prostituted to power, to the vindictive lusts of worldly men; nor the crimes of the Jewish priests, nor the perfidy of Judas, ever again be acted under the mild, good-tempered, and equal religion of Jesus Christ!

But though there be now no danger, that any of us can ever be brought to resemble Judas in his crimes, we may however resemble him in the form of mind which led to his crimes, and which can never lead us to good; and it may be wise in us to guard against the admission of that avarice and

worldly spirit, under which even an apostle fell. These are passions, to which perhaps too many of us submit, and this submission may betray us to great improprieties of moral behaviour; may lead to great distresses, to bitter remorse and self-condemnation; perhaps may terminate in the same act of desperation, which shut in the present scene of this guilty wretched man. Crimes of far inferior magnitude to his have armed the hand of a repentant criminal against his own life; and therefore it behoves us to maintain a wise and virtuous management of our minds, nor suffer any principle, nor any view to be ascendant within us, which in the hour of calm recollection and serious apprehension we shall be sure to condemn. Avarice and worldly-mindedness produce the lowest debasement and degeneracy of character; they are the poison of the moral soul; and, destroying every thing that is christian and divine in us, they commit the man to meanness, to shame, to vice, to misery. They planned
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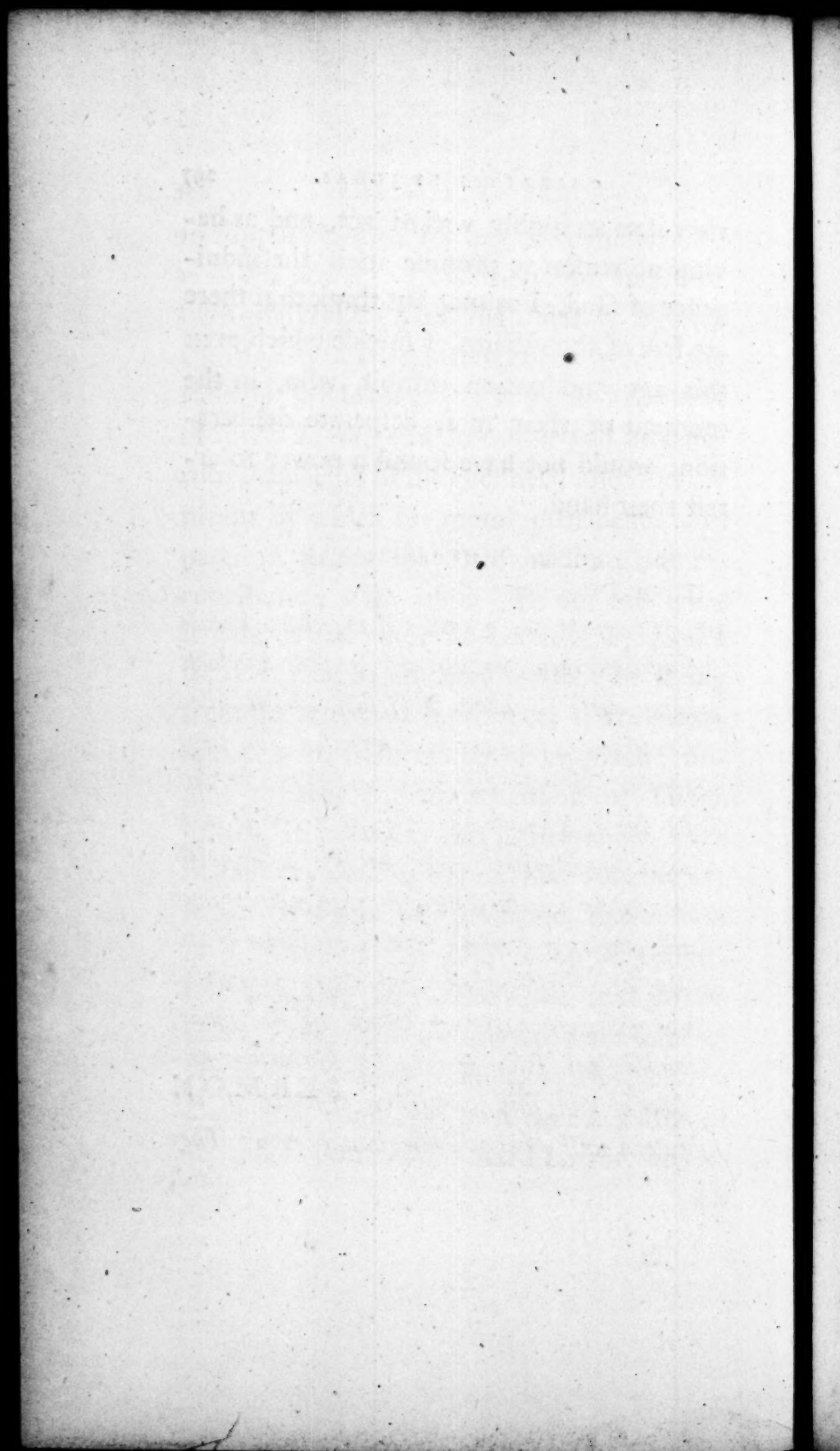
and conducted the tragedy of Jesus Christ; to them we have owed the many tragedies which succeeded to the sufferings and death of this divine personage; and they are to this day the source from which issues most of the wickedness which disgraces, and the wretchedness which embitters, this lower world. To repel their admission is indeed the constant lesson of christianity; but it is the lesson also of human nature, which every suffering, and every blessedness, and which every example of human life inculcates, whether of him who lowers or of him who dignifies the mind which he derives from God.

But, whatever our moral failings shall be found to be, let not self-murder ever enter our thoughts; that wretched refuge of the guilty and unhappy. No! let no repentings, no sufferings ever suggest such a thought to us; but may we be assured that it is as foolish, as it is wicked. Life may in many cases be a burthen, but to live was not the original gift of man to himself, nor

to support himself for one moment in life is in his power. It is therefore an act of high presumption, of high daring against the Majesty of that Sovereign, to whom the right of life belongs; it is an arraignment of his wisdom, and an unjust and ungenerous despairing of his goodness, and of those means by which his moral providence and parental mercy may still meditate our reconciliation with him. Be our case what it will, it can never be bettered by such a step; it may be rendered worse. In flying from the terrors of conscience, it arms conscience with fresh matter of reproach: unable to bear the apprehension of divine justice, it provokes this justice anew, even in the very *finishing* act of this probationary state. It is generally presumed, that suicide is preceded by the deprivation of reason; but I believe very falsely; at least in no other sense than we may palliate some of the most enormous crimes, by the plea of a disordered mind. If men were accustomed to reflect on it with a fixed horror, and to
view

view it as an highly wicked act, and as having no reason to promise itself the indulgence of God, I cannot but think that there are few of the victims of suicide which even this age and nation exhibit, who, in the moment of their most desperate deliberation, would not have found a power to arrest their hand.

SERMON



S E R M O N XIII.

ON THE CRIME AND PUNISHMENT OF THE
JEWISH NATION.

MATTH. XXVII.

17. *When they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas or Jesus, who is called Christ? — 18. For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. — 19. When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, have nothing to do with this just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream, because of him. — 20. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. — 21. The Governor answered and said unto them, whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said,*

said, Barabbas.—22. Pilate saith unto them, what shall I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all say unto him, let him be crucified!—23. And the Governor said, why! what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, let him be crucified!—24. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.—25. Then answered all the people, and said, his blood be on us, and on our children.

IF the transaction which I have just read to you, had no relation to a person, in whom we were deeply interested, yet in the mere page of history it would be a very affecting narrative. It presents an awful instance of the violation of justice, the savage excesses of intemperate zeal and interested malice, and the unmanly timidity of a judge, who, dispensing life and death, gives his sanction to a deed which

which his better conscience detests, and yields up the sacred rights of the innocent to the mad clamour of a tutored multitude. Though such a transaction cannot fail to excite many interesting reflections, I shall direct my principal attention to the horrid imprecation of the Jewish people on themselves and their posterity—"his blood be upon us and on our children."

Nothing shews the horrid face of superstitious zeal, and revengeful policy, in a more striking view, than the different conduct of Pilate and the Jewish nation. A tenderness to shed innocent blood was much less to be expected from the Roman governor than from this infatuated people, whose clamorous rage impelled him to this detested deed; for such scenes were but too familiar to the governors to whom Rome committed the rule of her provinces. Every page of her history is stained with such acts of injustice and blood; and Pilate in many preceding instances had not acted beneath
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the character of his country's rapine, violence, and cruelty. But, where no particular interest was to be subserved by the violation of right, or the murder of an innocent victim, justice resumed her place in his breast, held up to him the guilt and odium of such a deed, and awakened the apprehensions of a righteous and avenging providence. Though he found not within himself that firm integrity, which a judge, in whose hands is the great trust of life and death, ought never to abandon; yet his repeated earnestness to turn aside the implacable malice of the Jewish rulers, and the popular fury from the head of this just person, raises in us some degree of esteem and compassion for him. We lament the necessity which he seemed to feel, and wish that he had proceeded one step farther, in adhering firmly to the better sense of his own mind, by summoning the whole power of the Roman governor to repel the popular tumult, or by abiding the storm, rather than submit to what his soul condemned.

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Not all the water in the ocean can wash away even Pilate's guilt in this transaction; yet we are struck with the solemn and significant manner in which he expresses his detestation, and the abhorrence of his will to partake of the horrid crime: in open court he washes his hands, designing that this external purity should be the emblem of the cleanness of his soul; he proclaims, "I am innocent of the death of this just person, see ye to it. From me be averted the sin of this unrighteous determination: to your violence, not to my own sense of justice, I surrender this innocent victim: on you therefore, who compel me to what my mind abhors, be all the guilt, and all the punishment." This strongly pictures the state of his mind, and, contrasted with the implacable malice of the Jews, looks like virtue and integrity. A Roman, not unpractised in the ways of violence, injustice, and blood, shrinks from this deed; he feels for a Jew, while in all this multitude no fellow-Jew appears to feel any thing of a tender

tender and virtuous sympathy. Though the fame of such a character as that of Jesus Christ had in all probability reached the ears of Pilate, yet it is not to be presumed that he had ever been a witness of his miracles or his virtues. The Jews had seen him in all the divinity and sanctity of his character; but the God, whose hand had so visibly been with him, did not awe them, nor the remembrance of his virtues appease their rage. Devoted to the hopes of a temporal, not a spiritual deliverer, they gave the prophet and the man to the winds; and thought that a Messiah, who would not lead them to victory and empire, could only with his life pay the disappointment of their low-minded ambition. The guilt and vengeance, which Pilate with so much solemnity deprecates, they fearlessly challenge: "We have none of thy puny fears, we ask no water, O Pilate, to wash us from this stain; this just person awes not us; he is an enemy to our religion and to our policy, nor will any thing but his death satiate our resentment;

resentment; give a robber, a murderer, to mercy; but let this man die; on our heads and on the heads of our children be his blood, and all the vengeance which you may think to be due to it."

Ah! wretched men, heavily indeed has his blood fallen upon you and on your children, and little did ye think, in that moment of violence and passion, that ye were consenting to your own destruction; that ye were suitors to that Being, who has said, vengeance is mine, I will repay; suitors to him, to pour his whole wrath upon your nation. Little did ye think, that in that petition ye were fixing your own awful doom, and that the dream of worldly greatness, for which ye were ready to do any deed or to pay any price, was then hastening to its period. — This imprecation on such a transaction, considered as a national act, is truly horrid; it shews human nature in a most humiliating view; I know of nothing in history which can parallel it. To be wrought up to such a rage against such

a character as that of Jesus Christ, is strange; strange to behold a whole nation almost possessed with this rage; but stranger still, with a sense of God and of providence, to stake their own and the happiness of their posterity on the justice of such a deed. In the wild whirl of furious passion, man may be led to perpetrate any act; but give a single moment for reflection, and the mind sickens at the view of innocent blood; and if the idea of God be presented, it trembles before so dread an avenger. Nothing but the most horrid perversion of moral character can produce, even in an individual, such a spirit, as deliberately to look on this worst of human crimes, and invoke God to approve, or dare him to avenge it; and, when a nation can act this part, they must, as a nation, be abandoned by all virtue. This alone can solve the difficulty; and, if history did not report the Jewish nation at this very period to have been the most profligate that the world ever knew, we should almost be led to suspect the

the truth of the narrative before us, as a picture dark and horrid beyond human nature. Not all the vices of all the nations upon earth, if concentered into one view, can exceed the truth of Jewish abandonment and profligacy in the age of Jesus Christ. Their own historian, who fought for his country in her last struggle and has been careful for her honour where he could, as if he were directed by the hand of providence, has in the strongest terms attested to the truth of that character, which can alone account for such a proceeding in the body of this people.

Their atrocious crimes in ten thousand views, as well as the shedding the blood of this distinguished personage; their acting in defiance of heaven and of all that heaven approves, in too many horrid scenes, as well as imprecating all the vengeance of heaven on that dire deed, which the soul even of Pilate abhorred and renounced; may be considered as accumulating the wrath of heaven. Yet one single crime may be so

marked with guilt, may be so daring a defiance of a moral providence, be such an immoral opposition to its counsels, and provocation of its justice, as alone to vindicate the hand of God in all its anger, and alone be thought sufficient to call down destruction on a nation.—Such, whether viewed by a friend or a foe to Christianity, is the crime in question.—Whether Jesus Christ was or was not the very Messiah predicted by their antient prophets, he yet was venerable, he was amiable in himself; he was a blessing to any nation, nor could provoke the resentment of any mind, but that to which truth, and piety, and virtue, were rendered odious. Whether he were the promised Messiah or not, he was without doubt a person sent from God; no other hand but that of God could have effected the things which he did, in the open view of the whole nation. This the Jews themselves confessed; and, had he not declined the path of ambition to which they invited him, and to which their whole souls

had been devoted, he would have been
were

were given, he had had all their veneration and confidence; but in Jesus Christ God himself was rejected, because not co-operating with their worldly views. To lift the hand of vengeance against the messenger of heaven, and, rather than not riot in his blood, to dare the wrath of heaven, was a crime of the highest magnitude. It was setting themselves in opposition to the declared will of heaven; it was desperately to counteract its designs; it was, in the soberest view that can be taken of it, rebellion against the Majesty of heaven; and in contempt, and as it were in defiance of heaven, to wreak its malice, because heaven would not condescend to meet them in their favourite wish. Heaven sent them a prophet, a Messiah; but the Jews would have no prophet, no Messiah, if he led them not through desolation and blood to their flattered greatness; and they would pursue to death even him that was sent of heaven, though graced with all wisdom, virtue, and goodness,

ness, if not conspiring with their mad lust of power. There is reason therefore to view the terrible destruction of this nation, as the consequence of their treatment of this sacred person; and the language of Scripture leads us to, and Scripture is justified in, this view of it.

My remaining address to you on this subject will be to illustrate this view, to contemplate the awful ruin which followed this horrid imprecation of the Jewish people on their own heads, and on the heads of their children; and to connect this punishment with the crime.—These are the two divisions of the subject to which I shall in their order attend; viz. Did it happen to the Jews according to their daring defiance? did providence remarkably bare its arm against this offending, this highly offending nation?—and are we authorised to conclude, that this interposition of providence was in consequence of their rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God?

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It is remarkable, that the predominant passion, to which this innocent victim was sacrificed, was the provocative to their ruin; and that the Roman arm, which against the natural spirit and prejudices of their nation they solicited, and even compelled to execute this abhorred deed, was the minister of their ruin. Thus does providence at once exercise and vindicate its jurisdiction over men, by drawing the punishment out of the very crime, and by finding, in the instrument of national as well as individual sin, the dread executioner of its vengeance. To their lust of power, and their intolerance of foreign authority, they sacrificed every consideration of justice, of innocence, of virtuous merit, and even of reverence for God, who was witnessed in the works which this sacred Messenger performed: and this lust of power, as if it were inflamed to madness by this atrocious deed, soon precipitated and aggravated their ruin. The Roman power they abhorred; and the most invidious exercise of this power consisted in

reserving to itself the execution of justice : this power they imprecated on the head of the innocent, and soon it fell in all its vengeance on their own heads.

But a few years had elapsed from the death of Christ, when their impatience of the Roman yoke broke out in murmurs, in tumults and seditions, which, increasing from less to greater, ended in the total subversion of all order and civil authority ; invited every villain to take the lead ; every lying prophet to practise on the popular madness for independence ; and left to them and to the Romans no other decision but that of the sword. Flattered with every trifling success, and knowing not to use any success with moderation or humanity, they believed themselves equal to the arduous attempt of coping with the Roman strength in all its formidable greatness ; and by acts of desperate resistance, and every provocation of savage cruelty, they left to their enemy no choice but of defeat or exterminating vengeance. They were not awaken-

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ed out of their dream of empire by seeing their whole country, town by town, fall under the power of an enraged enemy, in despite of those efforts, which only minds like theirs could meditate: they were not softened to submission by the unequalled sufferings of their countrymen, by the sweeping carnage of all of their name. As if one single city were sufficient to stem the torrent of the Roman legions, and God in their most discouraging situation were bound to work out their deliverance, the miserable remnant of the Jewish name, whom the destroying sword had not yet reached, crowded into Jerusalem; as though the fate, that impelled them, had here collected them into a net, that the unpitying spoiler, the minister of divine vengeance, might wreak in one blow all his anger upon the Hebrew nation. The siege of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian, exhibits the most affecting spectacle of human misery, that all history gives any account of; in the reading of which, compassion and indignation by turns divide

divide the mind; compassion for the exquisite distresses of the devoted people, and indignation at the horrid crimes which almost justified these distresses.

The historian of this siege, viz. Josephus, was himself a Jew of distinguished rank; he was not only an eye-witness, but a leader and principal actor in this memorable war. So great, says he, was the calamity of these days, from the siege without and the factions within, that nothing like it was ever known in Jerusalem. Many prayed for the success of the enemy, and thought that captivity and even death was more eligible than to be the living spectator of such a dreadful scene of discord, confusion, famine, and blood. The stores of corn and other provisions, says he, which had been prepared for this siege, were by the madness of the besieged set on fire; and such a famine ensued, as determined many to steal out of the city by night, and rather throw themselves upon the mercy of an exasperated enemy, than wait death under the slow
excruciating

excruciating hand of famine within. But Titus, even the merciful Titus, well aware that necessity, not repentance, had driven them into his arms; and judging, more from the policy of the GENERAL, than the humanity of the prince who thought the day to be lost which was not marked with good, that if a desertion which threatened to be general were not discouraged, the remaining combatants would be enabled to maintain a longer resistance; Titus, ordered all the fugitives who fell into his hands (and they were many thousands) to be crucified before the walls. This order was so severely executed, that for several successive days five hundred in a day were crucified. Thus they, who clamoured so loudly and eagerly for the crucifixion of the innocent Jesus, had, alas! enough of crucifixion: they who imprecated his blood upon themselves and on their children, obtained their prayer in vengeance indeed! — At another time, says the same historian, two thousand Jews, who had made their escape out of the city, had
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their bowels ripped up by the merciless Roman soldier, on a report that these wretched fugitives had swallowed their gold and jewels, in order to preserve them from the rapine of friend and foe.— But the destruction from the enemy was nothing in comparison of what this devoted people suffered from the more cruel destroyer within. The factions of the leaders, who agreed in nothing but in the spoil and butchery of the people, and in their hatred of the Romans, exhibited such a scene of intestine hostilities, rapine, and blood, as must alone have exterminated the besieged, if the Roman sword had been idle. In fine, so dreadful was the carnage within and without the walls, that, though the siege lasted not quite six months, yet Josephus estimates that more than a million of Jews perished; and many, with such excruciating and protracted misery, as shocks humanity to think of.

The city at length being taken and sacked, the temple destroyed, and the whole land laid waste, the conqueror razed the
city

city and temple to the foundations, and passed the plough over them, at least over the site of the temple, in token of a perpetual desolation, and as if destined never again to be the haunt of men: the captives, a miserable remnant, were sold for slaves. The succeeding year, in his triumphant entry into Rome, the spoils of this exterminated people were carried in procession before him; among which were those, which were dearer than life to a Jew, the Golden Table, the Golden Candlestick, with its seven branches, and the Roll or Book of the Law.

Thus severely was fulfilled the awful prediction of our Saviour, that not one stone of those magnificent buildings, which the nation contemplated with so much pride, should be left upon another; that there should be such tribulation as never had been, nor should be again; and that, except these days should be shortened, no flesh should be saved, that is, the Jewish name should be utterly exterminated.

Nor

Nor was this the end of their sorrows. From that day to the present they have been a strange monument of the divine displeasure; the most signal monument that ever was exhibited amongst men. Dispersed over the whole world, yet rejected and despised wherever they have set their foot: never totally extirpated, yet never suffered to lose themselves by being blended with other nations, or to establish themselves into an independent nation or community. In every corner of the earth are they to be found; but, wherever found, considered as aliens and wanderers, without any stable property; contributing to the demands of every government, but admitted not to its offices, its honours and privileges. Existing generally at the mercy of those who receive them, and without almost the protection of law for the security of that wealth, which their indefatigable industry and commercial knowledge often procure to them; but considered as a sponge to be squeezed by many a rapacious government, when the sponge

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is filled. Nor their wealth only seized, but, to the disgrace of many a state which calls itself Christian, their liberty, their lives sacrificed, on the most frivolous pretences. Confiscation, imprisonment, exile and massacre, are the mercies which Christians have too often shewn them.

O wretched people! O guilty and abandoned nation! Whence this singularity in your lot? This dark cloud of awful dispensations always brooding, and often breaking in wrath upon your heads for so many ages? What account can be rendered of so strange a fate? To what, but to the hand of God, to the determined counsels of the Almighty, can we impute it?

This conducts us to the second enquiry; in which it will be seen, that it is no rashness of human judgment to refer to the counsels of the Almighty the fate of this people, whom not the revolution of ages, not the devouring waste of time, not the fluctuation of human affairs, not the frowns

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or favour of princes can destroy or rescue from the purposes of God; and that the whole history of their existence, and of their sufferings, is but the unfolding of the solemn predictions which were denounced against them.

SERMON

S E R M O N XIV.

ON THE CRIME AND PUNISHMENT OF THE
JEWISH NATION.

MATT. XXVII. 25.

*Then answered all the people and said, his blood
be upon us and on our children.*

THE crime and the sufferings of the Jewish nation, as independent facts, have been stated in the preceding discourse; the crime, as highly deserving of punishment; and the sufferings, if they were the punishment, as not inadequate to the crime. It remains to prove that they are thus connected; that the connection is not suggested by a rash and intemperate judgment, but is itself a fact; authenticated by the declaration of that Being, who in his counsels

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designed,

designed, and by his providence conducted, the execution of the punishment. If this connection be not well founded, the sufferings of the Jewish nation, whether at the period when their city and polity were destroyed, or in every subsequent period to the present day, are inapplicable to the truth of a moral providence, and to the truth of the Christian religion. I proceed therefore to the evidences of this connection; to produce the authority on which we acknowledge the hand of God in the calamities of this sinful nation, whose signal ruin avenged the cause of his injured and murdered Son.

Though the wisdom and holiness of God, as well as many striking incidents in the history of mankind, will lead us to conceive of a particular as well as a general providence, yet it is with great caution and modesty that we are to apply this doctrine to particular events. Rash and intemperate decisions, with respect to the supposed judgments of the moral Governor of the universe,

universe, have brought the doctrine of a particular providence into disrepute; and led many to conclude, that God acts in the present government of this sublunary world only by a general plan of established rule, but leaves the punishment of particular enormities to a day of stricter scrutiny.—We have, say they, no certain rule of judging what are the particular interpositions of divine providence, and what are to be referred to the general law of nature. It is no particular crime, or form of crime, that we can fix our eye upon; for, the crime which in some instances appears to be followed with the most striking manifestation of the divine displeasure, in others passes wholly unpunished, and is even attended with the highest prosperity and triumph: while the innocent and virtuous are often subjected to the same distresses, the same ruin and death, which are supposed to mark the secret hand of God as pursuing the wicked.

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Though no nation ever deserved worse at the hands of a moral providence, or ever received a more dreadful punishment than the Jewish nation; yet highly wicked and abandoned nations have escaped the present judgment of God, and have flourished in their crimes, while the most desolating calamities have fallen on the most unoffending and virtuous. History tells many an ungrateful tale of the triumphs of ambition over mild and peaceable nations. The savage Spaniards, who, in the invasion of America, appear as if the dogs of hell had been let loose on human kind, met with no check in their conquest and desolation of its peaceable inhabitants. The Peruvians, than whom no nation of the earth ever exhibited a more agreeable picture of innocence, mildness, gentleness, and even purity of manners, fell in millions under the hands of a few ruffians, such as our goals cannot furnish: the worst that passes into eternity from the gallows, compared with them, is almost a saint. Few nations have upon the whole

whole preserved a more peaceable and orderly character than the Chinese; yet the Tartars, a wild and barbarous people, have been suffered to sweep them in multitudes off the face of the earth with all the wantonness of cruelty.—Who shall say then that God more interested himself in the punishment of the Jewish nation than any other, or that their fate was the punishment of their more than savage thirst for the blood of the innocent Jesus? Our Saviour himself in two instances, that of the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and of the multitude upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, has cautioned us against the hasty and too often uncharitable habit of applying the judgments of God to the unhappy.

The direct answer to the demand is, that God himself, in the case of the Jewish people, challenges the suffering as the sentence of his justice, executed under the direction of his providence; and this declaration of God is inferred from the clearest and most

circumstantial prophecies that ever were delivered. If the destruction of the Jewish territory, city, temple, and polity, and subsequent dispersion of the nation, was predicted in the most flourishing periods, or when there was not the least human probability of such an event, when there were no data on which conjecture could fasten itself; and if these predictions be delivered in terms as minute and circumstantial almost as those in which the historian has recorded the events; then it is not infidelity, but obstinacy, which disowns the hand of God as operating in the ruin of this criminal nation.

The fate of the Jewish nation, even down to the present period, may be thought to be prefigured in the denunciations of their earliest prophets, even of Moses himself. In the xviii. chap. Deut. Moses is generally understood to predict the coming of the Messiah; and if, by the future prophet there announced to them, the Messiah be intended, in the 19th verse he denounces
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the general judgment of God against his country, if it should not hearken to the words of this prophet. If this be the most fair and natural interpretation, then the connecting the sufferings of the Jewish people with their rejection of the Messiah, and as the punishment of an offended God, is derived from very early authority. It would not be difficult to collect the same information from the subsequent prophets of the Old Testament, but, as more direct and fuller evidence presents itself, it is less necessary to insist upon them.—But the words of Daniel are too particular to be passed over with the same neglect. At the close of the ix. chap. says he, “ Seventy weeks
 “ are determined upon thy people, and
 “ upon thy holy city, to finish the trans-
 “ gression, and to make an end of sins, and
 “ to make reconciliation for iniquity, and
 “ to bring in everlasting righteousness, and
 “ to seal up the vision and prophecy, and
 “ to anoint the most holy. Know there-
 “ fore and understand, that, from the go-

“ ing forth of the commandment to restore
 “ and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah
 “ the prince, shall be seven weeks; and
 “ three-score and two weeks the street shall
 “ be built again, and the wall, even in
 “ troublous times: and after three-score
 “ and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off,
 “ but not for himself; and the people of
 “ the prince, that shall come, shall destroy
 “ the city and the sanctuary, and the end
 “ thereof shall be with a flood, and unto
 “ the end of the war desolations are deter-
 “ mined.” In this prophecy it is not my
 concern to enter into the calculation of the
 time from the return of the Jews out of
 their captivity to the death of the Messiah,
 but to observe that the destruction of the city
 and temple, and subsequent desolation, are
 awfully foretold; and that this ruin, which
 it is said shall be like a flood that sweeps
 all away, is expressly connected with the
 cutting off of the Messiah; and so connec-
 ted, that it is impossible not to consider the
 ruin, as the punishment provided by God
 for

for the crime. If we had no other guide to direct us in referring the destruction of the Jewish nation to the displeasure of God for the rejection and cruel treatment of his Son, this would justify us in ascribing their fate to the avenging hand of providence.

But from the mouth of the innocent Victim himself, in whose person the crimes of this nation were completed, we receive, not the prophecy, but almost the history of their fall; of that desolation, which has hitherto pursued them; and all this ruin, which he so plainly predicts, he has expressly connected with their rejection and treatment of himself.—The parable of the Lord of the vineyard fixes the character of the crime, and annexes the punishment to the crime.* It is because of their cruel treatment of the messengers, and lastly of himself whom God had sent unto them; that in this parable, and especially in the application of it, he denounces the vengeance of

* Matth. xxii. 23.

the Almighty against them. After having beaten some, and killed others, and lastly himself the son, whom the lord hoped that they would reverence; our Lord, by a very natural question, leads them to the condemnation of themselves, and the justification of the divine sentence; when, adopting their judgment, he quits the parable, and with plainness and majesty pronounces their righteous doom. Therefore, that is in consequence of this last atrocious deed, the kingdom shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.—When our Lord reproaches them for the blood of the prophets and wise men,* which, from an immoral aversion to their lessons, they had spilt, he has himself clearly in view; for, expecting his own violent death, he bids them fill up the measure of their fathers. Affected with this melancholy character of his country, and too well convinced that the gracious designs of God

* Matth. xxiii. 29.

to them would be defeated by their hardness of heart and immoral superstition, he breaks out into this affecting apostrophe; "O
" Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest
" the prophets, and stonest them that are
" sent unto thee, how often would I have
" gathered thy children together, even as a
" hen gathereth her chickens under her
" wings, and ye would not. Behold your
" house is left unto you desolate." Thus decisive is the application which our Lord makes of the approaching calamities of the Jewish nation, to their rejection and murder of the Messiah;—nor are these the only passages in which the same information is clearly signified.—As these calamities therefore are connected with their treatment of himself, let us now see whether his prediction of the calamities answer to the event, and convince us that he spoke by the inspiration of that Being, who hath the fate of nations in his hands.

On his triumphant entry into Jerusalem,
as he approached the city, he looked upon
and

and wept over it;* saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. For, the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another."

How particularly every word of this prediction was verified in the siege, and in the utter destruction of the city, we have already seen in the preceding discourse. Our Lord adds, "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation;" in which he seems plainly to allude to the strange infatuation of the Jewish nation, and their confidence in the protection of the Almighty, and in an assured deliverance by the promised Messiah, as if he were yet to ap-

* Luke, xix. 41.

pear,

pear, or were then within their walls; which led them to the last to brave the overwhelming power of the Roman armies, and decline all the ways of mercy, to which Titus, their humane enemy, was greatly inclined.—But the xxiv. Matth. the xiii. Mark, and the xxi. Luke, in which each of the evangelists record the same discourses of their Lord, are a summary of every awful misery which the Jewish historian, an eye-witness of the ruin of his country, has so faithfully narrated. To these I refer you, as it is not necessary to detain you by a repetition of what all or most of you know, and may so easily renew the knowledge of.

Let us bring the prediction home, so as to make the deeper impression, by observing how, in every minute particular, it was verified.

The time is limited, so as perfectly to accord with the fulfillment. “ This generation (says our Lord) shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.” Nor did this generation pass away; for, only
thirty-

thirty-six years intervened from the time in which our Lord thus spoke, to the final destruction of Jerusalem. And there were no proper symptoms of a fate so rapidly approaching, none which marked the Jews as in any greater danger of extermination, than the many provinces which flourished under the Roman dominion. It is admitted, that the factious spirit of the Jewish nation, their impatience of a foreign yoke, fostered by their expectation of a temporal deliverer in the person of the promised Messiah, might tempt mere human sagacity to foretel a revolt from the Roman power; yet that the revolt would fall within such a limit of time, that it would be accompanied with such obstinacy and such daring, with such provocations of Roman vengeance; that there should be a provision of co-operating causes to render the consequences of the revolt so singularly terrible, was beyond all conjecture, because beyond all precedent. Revolts were daily occurring throughout the vast extent of the Roman empire, but

but the fate of the Jewish nation has no parallel in the whole history of Rome, neither in the ages preceding nor subsequent to this period. Such treatment of a dependent province was unknown to Rome; she had too much wisdom to adopt such a policy, and, cruel as her ambition often was, too much humanity to practise it. The truth is, that something, which in the ordinary way of human nature we cannot well account for, and certainly could not have foreseen, produced this desolating ruin of the Jewish territory and name. The predicting the time therefore, as well as the circumstances, is highly remarkable; and the imprecation of the Jews was thereby verified in its full extent. Whatever might befall their distant posterity, in that flourishing estate in which they then stood, they could have no idea that destruction was so near their door; but the blood of this just person fell in heavy vengeance, not upon their children alone, but upon themselves;

selves; upon many, without doubt, who joined in this horrid imprecation.*

Our Lord observes, many shall come in my name, saying, "I am Christ, and shall deceive many." And fatal indeed were these impostors to many of the deluded Jews; they became more and more frequent,

* Though the time be limited by our Saviour within the compass of one generation, yet the precise year in that period is concealed, as being known to God only. It is remarkable, that Daniel, though he fixes the very hour almost of the restoration of the Jews, of the finishing of the temple, and the cutting off of the Messiah, though he foretells the destruction of the Jewish state as consequent to this national crime, yet is silent as to the very season in which this ruinous event should happen. Daniel only says, that the punishment should follow the crime.—Our Lord adds thereto, that it should take place before the present generation should pass away; but both of them leave the precise moment undetermined. Now in this there is an agreement connected with much difference, which is not easy to be accounted for, but in admitting that they both spoke so far, as the spirit of truth imparted to them. For, that the latter did not copy from the former, if the spleen of scepticism should conceive such a suspicion, is sufficiently clear, from the many interesting particulars which our Lord has added to the general prediction of Daniel, and from his so far ascertaining the time, as to assign the limit which it should not exceed.

as the time of general ruin approached, and were in truth, under the hand of providence, one prime source of their defection from the Roman dominion, and of all their misery. In this also was the prediction of our Lord circumstantially verified—but a remarkable connection is to be observed between the punishment and the crime. In rejecting and murdering the true Messiah, they provoked all the displeasure of the God who sent him; and, in their weak and passionate attachment to every false Messiah, they found the punishment, the destruction which their former conduct merited.

Our Lord mentions other heralds of their impending doom; war and rumours of war, famine, and pestilences, and earthquakes, which shall be the beginning of sorrows, and the warnings of the divine vengeance, ready to be poured out in all its terror. — Dissentions and tumults and civil wars, and oceans of blood shed with a savage fury wherever the Jewish name was found, were indeed the sad prelude of

the hastening ruin. The attempt of Caligula, a little before, to erect his statue in the temple itself, had nearly kindled the fire in all its rage, but the sudden death of that frantic prince suspended for a while their fate. In the subsequent reigns of Claudius and Nero, these tumults and wars dreadfully broke forth, nor was the noise of war ever stilled in Judæa, or the neighbouring provinces, which swarmed with Jews, to the time of its final ruin. A contention between the Jews and Syrians about the right of a single town enflamed both nations, and divided them into two hostile parties in every city almost of their populous provinces. In the town itself, which was the original object of their contention, above twenty thousand Jews were slain, and the remainder of the Jewish name expelled. This was returned with equal cruelty upon the heads of the Syrians by the whole power of the Jews, and in continual inroads through Syria, an incredible number of their enemies were slaughtered. This provoked

a savage retaliation; contending armies were exhibited in every district; and soon an hundred thousand had fallen on both sides in this quarrel. At Alexandria the enmity to the Jewish name revived, and fifty thousand Jews fell in one single massacre. The same dreadful scenes were exhibited in various places, all directed against the Jewish name, with a fury which seemed out of the course of human nature. These wars drew nearer and nearer to Jerusalem; the whole province of Judæa was stained with blood; they were provoked to lift the sword in civil tumult against the authority of Rome; and the very temple itself was defiled with the profanations of war. Assassinations became frequent even while the rites of their religion were celebrating.

To these calamities were added famine and pestilences and earthquakes. Melancholy mention is made of the two former by Josephus, and of the numbers whom they swept away. More than twelve ruinous earthquakes are noticed by various histori-

ans from the time of our Saviour's crucifixion to the destruction of Jerusalem; the like to which is not to be found, I believe, in all history during the same period. Many of these swallowed whole cities of great extent; and of one, in Judæa, Josephus remarks, "that there broke out by night a
" most dreadful tempest, of violent tem-
" pests, and torrents of rain, and continual
" lightnings and horrid thunderings and
" prodigious bellowings of the shaken
" earth, as if the constitution of the uni-
" verse were confounded for the destruction
" of men. From whence, says he, one
" might easily perceive, that these things
" portended no common calamity;" as if he were commenting on the very words of our Saviour.

Our Lord adds, "that this end shall not
" come, before the gospel be preached unto
" all nations." An event, which, astonishing as it may seem, and beyond all human wisdom to have conceived, as beyond all human power to have produced, was how-
ever

ever actually verified; if *by all nations* we understand the extent of the Roman empire together with the surrounding kingdoms, which comprehended almost the whole of the then known and civilized world. This heresy, as the Jews termed it, alarming to them in its first appearance, they thought to have stifled in its infancy by the death of its founder. But while, as the punishment of their crime, their *own* religion was devoted to ruin, *this* was destined to a rapid and extensive spread; and the fate of the Jews appeared to be suspended by providence, and the avenging of his blood deferred, only till they should see the miraculous triumph of that cause, which they endeavoured to crush by one atrocious deed.

The last signal of the breaking storm is the abomination of desolation, which had been spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, or, as it is expressed in St. Matthew, standing where it ought not. The interpretation of this sign

is attended with no difficulty, as it is well known, that the word *abomination* was with the Jews a significant expression for every idol, which their religion peculiarly abhorred. The banners of the Romans exhibited the Gods whom the soldiers specially adored, their eagles, and the images of their deified emperors. These it had more than once been attempted to display in Judæa, in the view of Jerusalem itself, and even to fix up in the very temple. But the earnest solicitations of the Jewish nation, with their firm determination to face death itself in whatever shape, rather than submit to such a profanation, had hitherto averted from them this humiliating indignity. This spectacle, with its regularly increasing face of horror, was now to be exhibited to the Jews, as the last sad preface of their impending ruin. As the Roman armies approached to Jerusalem, which with all its vicinity was the holy place to a Jew, these idolatrous objects of the Roman worship were triumphantly displayed in
their

their military ensigns; so as that the impious worship insulted the view of the besieged. This was a sign of the threatened destruction, which no Jew, who put faith in the prophecies of Jesus Christ, could avoid attending to. Accordingly the Jewish converts to the faith of Christ observed the warning of their Master; and, as this offensive fight was exhibited in the march through the holy land to the holy city, they generally, if not universally, retired from Jerusalem, which they now considered as devoted to certain and immediate destruction. Our Lord had prepared his followers to attend particularly to this warning, by annexing to this part of his prediction, and to no other, this marked admonition; “whosoever readeth, let him understand!” that is, whosoever, by being my follower, hath the opportunity of repeatedly hearing or reading these words of mine, let him acknowledge the moment of fulfillment, and instantly rescue himself from the wrath of an offended God. For our Lord immedi-

ately subjoins in a series of precepts, which are to this amount, let those who observe this spectacle and wish to save themselves, flee without a moment's delay. This benevolent caution of their Master was due to his affectionate disciples; they had not shared in the guilt of the devoted Jews; the caution was thankfully embraced by them; and to this they owed their preservation. Thus the guilty alone, who either had personally acted in the rejection and death of Jesus Christ, or who by their impenitence approved and partook of the guilt of their fathers, were separated for ruin; and the blood, which had been imprecated on their own heads and on the heads of their children, was fatally reserved for them.

Every circumstance in this prediction had its full and remarkable accomplishment. The dreadfulnefs of the ruin is strongly announced in these words; " Then shall
 " be great tribulation in these days, such
 " as has not been since the beginning of
 " the

“ the world, no! nor ever shall be.” The words of the historian exactly concur with those of our Saviour. “ From the highest felicity our city was thrown down to the extremest misery; insomuch that if the misfortunes of all from the beginning of the world were compared with those of the Jews, they would appear inferior in comparison: in fine, (he adds,) no city ever suffered such things, as no other generation from the beginning of the world was ever more fruitful in wickedness.”

Our Lord proceeds, “ except these days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elects’ sake they should be shortened.”—Providence seemed to raise up two of the most distinguished characters in history, and in the most profligate and abandoned age of the Romans, in order to execute this vengeance on the nation whom he had abandoned to the spoiler; that in the execution he might find characters which were adapted to the counsels of his providence. Great magnanimity,

ty, wisdom, and self-command, joined to great justice and humanity, were the prominent features of Vespasian and Titus. Had a more unfeeling leader of the Roman armies left it to this infatuated nation, to serve his views by their *own* deplorable factions and civil contests, they would have been more dread executioners of the divine vengeance than the Roman sword. Vespasian first intended to have committed the besieged to famine and to their own intestine fury; but, on a representation that many who were not ill affected to peace would thus perish with the guilty, he embraced the humaner intention of a more speedy but more doubtful victory, though to be attended with more loss of Roman blood. His generous son, on whom the command devolved, entered still more into the views of his father; and, at whatever expence, pushed on the operations of the siege, that he might sooner rescue the remains of this wretched nation from their horrible miseries. The unnatural madness
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of the besieged accelerated the conclusion, by burning their great store of provisions, which would have sufficed for many years; as if they had been driven by the hand of God to what could least of all have been expected in their deplorable situation. And, in the last attack, they seemed to be deserted by their former desperate courage, and beyond all expectation, and without any apparent cause, abandoned their strongest walls and towers, from which, by the confession of the Romans themselves, they never could have been driven but by the hand of famine. Titus, as he was viewing the fortifications, after the capture of the town, beheld his conquest with astonishment, expressing himself in these remarkable words; “ we have fought with God on our side, “ and it is God who hath forced the Jews “ out of their strong holds, for what could “ the hand of man or machines have effected against them?” It was the judgment of Titus therefore, that God himself by his secret influence had shortened these days.

And

And it was owing to the farther humanity of Titus, that the unappeased enmity of their persecuting neighbours was not suffered utterly to exterminate them; according to the counsels of God, who was determined to reserve a remnant of them, as a perpetual witness of himself to the latest hour of time.

The last concluding event of this tragedy is remarkably predicted by our Lord in these words: "Your kingdom shall be taken from you; you shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled." How remarkably this prediction has been accomplished in the fate of the Jews, subsequent to the destruction of their city, and in their condition through the whole length of intervening time to the present period, has been sufficiently observed at the close of the preceding discourse. The Jews have ever been, and are at this day, in a captive state with every nation almost

almost under heaven; and their city has ever been trodden down of the Gentile, in spite of one feeble and ill-meant effort of an apostate emperor; and assuredly shall be until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.— The continued verification of this part of the prophecy, in itself the most singular phenomenon that ever was exhibited in the whole history of men, and which no human sagacity could ever have divined, is a perpetual demonstration before our eyes of the hand of God over this devoted nation, and sufficient alone to strike incredulity dumb.

Upon the whole, besides the denunciation of our Lord, which so expressly threatened this fate in all its minute circumstances, as the determined punishment of God for their rejection and treatment of himself; there are several other circumstances, which we cannot avoid to fix our eye upon, as witnessing a striking correspondence between the punishment and the crime. — They committed this innocent victim to death, when

when the nation was assembled to celebrate the passover: and their *own* funeral was acted, when they were assembled for the same purpose, and was thereby deeply heightened, as the whole nation was collected as it were to meet its fate. The rejection of the true Messiah was their *crime*, and their ill-directed passion for false Messiahs led to their ruin. They sold Jesus Christ as a slave to his detested betrayer; and they were themselves given up to slavery at the vilest prices. They preferred a robber and a murderer to Jesus Christ; and they were miserably laid waste, harrassed, and massacred by robbers and murderers. They demanded the life of Christ under the pretended plea that he invaded the Roman sovereignty: and their punishment sprang out of their abhorrence and rejection of this very sovereignty. They crucified Jesus Christ before the walls of the city: and their own multiplied crucifixions before the same walls afforded a horrid spectacle of the same treatment.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

ON THE CRIME AND PUNISHMENT OF THE JEWISH NATION.

MATTH. XXVII. 25.

*Then answered all the people and said, his blood
be upon us and on our children.*

HAVING stated the crime and the sufferings of the Jewish nation, and having established the principal object in view, viz. the presence of God in these sufferings, as avenging therein his Son, and punishing a crime in which his own moral providence was daringly opposed and insulted; I cannot withhold, nor would you wish me to withhold, those reflections which unavoidably present themselves; as the subject is of high importance, having direct relation

relation to the moral providence of God, and the truth of the Christian religion. I proceed therefore to make this application of the subject.

Christianity, as a revelation from God, stands upon a different ground from the religion of nature, and has a more difficult cause to plead. Facts as they exist in nature, and the conclusions to which they lead, must be received, of whatever complexion or tendency these conclusions may be. But Christianity must not only produce her proper evidence of proceeding from God, but even this evidence must be suspended till her doctrines receive the sanction of reason and natural religion. Revelation may certainly go far beyond the light of nature, she may discover to us what reason never would have attained to; but if one doctrine can be fastened on her, which is abhorrent to the undoubted character of God, the whole superstructure is shaken, nor can any evidence be pleaded against so irresistible an objection. Thus
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in the present instance, though no evidence can appear to be more decisive of the truth of Christianity than our Lord's prophetic view of the ruin of Jerusalem, and continued desolation of the Jewish nation; yet the character in which God is introduced as avenging the cause of Jesus Christ, must be consistent with our most honourable ideas of God, or we must reject the prophecy and the application of it, as an absolute nullity, rather than reject this eternal truth, that God cannot dishonour himself.—I think it my first duty therefore to vindicate God in the punishment of the Jewish nation, before I make any other application of my subject.

And in this I encounter no difficulty. All the doctrine of the New Testament is worthy of the evidence with which it is announced to us. The punishment of the Jewish nation, awful as it is, does not dishonour God, in being referred to him. It is not more than might be expected to issue from the divine moral government; though,

if God had not been pleased to reveal himself to us as the author of this punishment, the present imperfect state of things, and unequal distribution of justice, would not have authorised us to ascribe it to him. But it vindicates Scripture, that, in referring the sufferings of the Jews to the overruling hand of an offended Deity, we see nothing that is unsuited to the justice and holiness of God. — The vindication of the divine providence in the punishment of this once favoured people, proceeds upon the supposition of the truth of Christianity, and that the evidence of this truth was presented to the Jewish nation, with a force which ought not to have been resisted. It contemplates Jesus Christ as the messenger of a righteous and merciful God, for the recovery of a deluded and miserable world, and commissioned in the first place to the Jewish nation: it contemplates in him, and in the mighty works which he performed, the clear manifestation of a divine power: it turns its view on the innocence of his life,
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on the wisdom, dignity, and purity of his doctrines, on the benevolent intention of all that he did and said, on the moral excellence of his precepts, his disinterested superiority to all ambitious and worldly temptations; on the gentleness, the mildness, the patience of his whole deportment; and last of all, what peculiarly addresses itself to a Jew, on the premonitions by the mouth of the preceding prophets of such a deliverer, in all the sanctity and humiliation of his character, together with the signification of the very time in which he should appear. Now, connected with all these circumstances, the guilt of the Jewish nation in rejecting the Messiah, and much more in their horrid treatment of him, is a crime of the very highest magnitude. It is that, if any, which may be allowed to challenge all the indignation of the God, whose providence, and holiness, and mercy, were thus insulted; who could not be supposed to look with indifference on the persecution and death of his beloved. A personage imme-

diately sent by God on the wisest and kindest errand to our world, required to be vindicated at the hands of God, and to have the triumph of his enemies returned upon themselves; that they should be made an awful spectacle of punishment to the world for their obstinacy and wickedness in opposing the merciful provisions of the moral ruler of the universe, and executing the most detested act of injustice and cruelty, to gratify their wicked policy.

For, observe, that it is not to an unfortunate and pardonable unbelief that we are to refer the conduct of the Jews in their rejection and treatment of the Messiah; but to their vices, to their immoral superstition, to that worldly policy, which had destroyed all love of truth, and piety, and goodness in them, which would not suffer them to see or own a God, unless in a scheme of temporal power and grandeur. This hardened their hearts; annihilated to them all the miracles and virtues of Jesus Christ; and, because he would not submit himself to
their

their worldly views, drew down all their wrath and malice on the head of the most innocent and upright character that ever trod the stage of human life, the wisest and most enlightened instructor that ever appeared for the good of a bewildered and misguided world. They hated him, because he set himself against their superstition and corruptions, because he taught a doctrine which their earth-devoted passions could not welcome, because he would not be a Jew of their own form, because he dared to extend the providence of God beyond the descendants of Abraham; because he predicted the punishment of God for their crimes, their impenitence, their unbelief; because he warned them of the withdrawing of the divine favour from them, and extending it to nations, whom they believed to be destined to their triumph, and to be the subjects of their ambition and oppression.

All this character of the Jewish nation, this source and progress of the Jewish hatred, is strongly marked in the history of the

New Testament, in which we behold not a want of conviction, but a determined and unappeased hatred of truth and goodness in the person of Jesus Christ. They could not deny his miracles; but they abhorred both them and their author, because not directed to the single end for which alone they wished a God to interpose. They were struck dumb with his unanswerable reasoning, and retired in shame and confusion from his dignified rebukes; but the one stirred no generous affection in them, the other no humble penitence; they only served to provoke their malice the more, their revenge, their eager desire to silence the tongue that awed and upbraided them. Hence their consultations to entrap this dreaded informer in his unguarded moments, if any might be found in him, if innocence and wisdom have any unguarded moments; to draw him into some confession, some declaration, which might either subject him to the Roman jealousy, or to the popular hatred. Hence that influence
which

which they at length acquired over the popular passions, that direction which they were enabled to give to them, and that facility with which the people, who but yesterday revered and adored him, who with loud hosannas of triumph proclaimed his entry into Jerusalem, turned in rage against him, because disappointed in their hopes of a temporal Messiah.* Hence, in fine, the last scene of violence, perjury, injustice, and cruelty, that universal madness wherewith

* The defection of the Jewish populace, and their sudden animosity against Christ, is ascribed to the natural levity and inconstancy of a populace. But this is admitting an effect without assigning a cause. There must be some reason, wise or foolish, for every change of mind even with the most light and fickle. The wisdom, the sanctity, and the miracles of Christ, had made an impression on the Jewish people, but it was an impression which could not be separated from their expectation of a temporal deliverer. Their hopes of this desired event were raised to the greatest height on his public entry into Jerusalem; these hopes were thrown down to the ground by the subsequent conduct of Christ. Their disappointment converted their affection into anger, and they suddenly were fitted to be the tools of that more systematic hatred which their rulers entertained.

both rulers and people thirsted for his blood, beat back the remonstrances of the less hardened Pilate, and, if any vengeance awaited such a transaction, dared it to its utmost, and imprecated it in all its terror upon themselves and on their children.

It is not therefore a want of conviction, but an opposition to and a stifling of conviction, founded in superstition, in a worldly spirit, in an immoral and depraved character, that constitutes the high crime of the Jewish nation, in rejecting, persecuting, and murdering the Messiah; whose miracles astonished them, whose virtues they unwillingly revered, and whose wisdom they could make no reply to. This view of the Jewish crime is necessary, in order to see the conduct of providence to this offending nation in such a light, as justifies even the benevolent God of Jesus Christ.

But not only is the punishment just, as not disproportioned to this single crime; but it becomes us to consider, that a series of similar crimes, leading to and terminating

ting in this more atrocious one, drew down the long suspended anger of an offended God. Every injurious treatment of the prophets, whom the goodness of heaven had raised up for their correction and amendment, every impenitent rejection of their pious and moral message, was the prelude to this act; and accumulated and justified the punishment of God, in whatever extent it should fall on their devoted heads. To this, as well as to the rejection and cruel treatment of himself, and to the impending persecution of his innocent disciples and successors, as constituting one great continued crime, our Lord himself refers the dread punishment of this abandoned people. "Ye are the children of
 " them, says he, who killed the prophets;
 " fill ye up then the measure of your fa-
 " thers. Prophets and wise men await you
 " in my name, but some of them shall ye
 " kill and crucify, and some shall ye
 " scourge in your synagogues, and perse-
 " cute from city to city, that upon you
 " may

" may come all the righteous blood shed
 " upon the earth, from the righteous Abel,
 " unto the blood of Zecharias. Oh Jeru-
 " salem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the
 " prophets, and stonest them that are sent
 " unto thee; behold thy house is left unto
 " thee desolate! the favour, the protection
 " of God is withdrawn from you, nor shall
 " ye see me henceforth, nor know the bles-
 " sing which I came to reveal unto you,
 " till in full penitence and conviction ye
 " shall say, blessed is he who cometh in the
 " name of the Lord."

That which vindicated the providence of
 God in the awful punishment of the per-
 petrators of our Saviour's death, and of
 their immediate successors, still justifies the
 singular fate of this obstinate and impeni-
 tent nation. Their fathers' guilt they adopt,
 by entering into their sentiments; by justi-
 fying it in all its injustice and cruelty;
 by persevering in the same hardness of heart;
 by continuing to disown the Messiah, who, if
 any, corresponded to the predictions of their
 revered

revered prophets; who, if any, was accompanied with the hand of God; and by still feeding upon delusive hopes, though near two thousand years have elapsed from the promised period; by being as gross, carnal, and immoral in their views, as their fathers were, who to this worldly spirit sacrificed the Lord of life; by still passionately looking for, and being disposed to receive no other than a temporal deliverer. Singular almost in their obstinate unbelief, possessed of all the evidences of Christianity, and themselves the most striking evidence, they stand alone amidst nations, who have received this blessing from God, and therefore are singular objects of divine displeasure. The brand still continues on them, the hand of offended providence still pursues them; but the door of mercy lies open to them. Individuals are rescued from the fate of this nation, and from the visible displeasure of God, as they enter into the christian communion, and become adopted into the body of a christian nation; but, till they re-
pent

pent and return as a people, they are and shall be, as a people, the just monument of that providence, who has withdrawn himself from them, and holds them up as a witness of himself to all nations; a witness of his power, of his justice, of his holiness, and of his displeasure.*

* The punishment of a people for general and national guilt, is to be contemplated in the same view as the punishment of a single individual. Innocent sufferers may be involved therein; but if the nation as one person deserve the interposition, and if the national character continue unaltered, the punishment, as in the case of a single offender, is justified. This is a general maxim, which applies itself to the vindication of a moral providence in many of the national revolutions and calamities which history records.

In this justification of God, I have taken no notice of the application of the Jewish punishment to the purposes of a moral providence; because, independent of all secondary use, guilt must appear to justify punishment, and guilt adequate to the punishment. It is, however, a pleasing view of God, and the invariable character of his justice, that punishment in his hands is the minister of good; of good perhaps even to the offender, of good assuredly to the other subjects of his government. This farther vindication of God, in the punishment of the Jews, is prosecuted in the remainder of the sermon.

Having

Having therefore vindicated Christianity, as not dishonouring God in referring to him the punishment of the Jewish nation, we may safely pass to the religious and moral application of the subject.

For not only is the justice of an offended, but the wisdom of a righteous God, manifested in the singular fate of this suffering nation. We see not with our eyes the glory to which the rewarder of righteousness has exalted his Son, who did and suffered so much for the moral restoration of mankind; this is reserved for the day which shall solve all our doubts; but we see the hand of God bared against those, who dared to oppose themselves against his righteous and moral administration; who impotently thought to stifle it in the blood of its virtuous founder; that wonderful and amiable Mediator whom God owned as the messenger of his grace to man; we behold the Majesty of heaven, descending to meet our view, and bearing irresistible testimony to the mission of his Son.

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The literal accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction on his murderers, of his prediction on their children, the continued existence, character, and irremovable fate of this people, are a continued and unanswerable demonstration of the God, who sent Jesus Christ into the world: they are that miracle which is perpetually acting, that evidence of the truth of christianity, which is continually present to our senses, which we see with our own eyes, which infidelity can make no reply to. By whomsoever the New Testament was penned, no human wisdom could have foreseen the destruction of the Jewish state, the desolation of Jerusalem and its wretched inhabitants; and, with the event, the very time; the dispersion of their posterity, throughout every corner of the earth; the contempt, the unappeased odium, and often severe and merciless hand, with which every nation should receive them, as if the bond of humanity were to be broken only with respect to them; their wonderful preservation and
increase

increase in every hostile country, as if no frown of an angry world could melt them down into oblivion, no persecution exterminate them; their inflexible impenitence in the midst of nations yielding to the faith of the Gospel, and disgrace and injury awaiting them as the consequence of their impenitence; their being manifestly reserved for that day, when the innocence which they slandered, the truth which they rejected, the virtue which they persecuted, the grace which they disdained, shall triumph even over their hardness; all these things no human wisdom could have foreseen. But all these things the wisdom, that dictated the Gospel, did foresee; and all these things, in the very order, and to the very letter as they were foretold, have wonderfully come to pass, and are still acting before our eyes.—Thanks be to God, who conducts the most awful monuments of his justice, of his displeasure, to the purposes even of mercy and good; who proclaims himself, in so memorable an instance, the
God

God of righteousness; who, while he avenges the treatment of his injured Son, vindicates the cause for which he sent him into the world; proclaims to every mind the truth, the grace, the mercy, which he delivered by him; asserts his providence over men by this striking memorial of it; and leaves to no honest, no teachable, no reflecting mind, the possibility of doubting, either of the God of nature, or the God of Jesus Christ.

Again, the fate of this nation is a great example of the moral justice of God, of that justice which awaits every act of distinguished wickedness. Though guilt meets not always with its proper and deserved punishment here, yet in the history of the Jews we discover the finger of an avenging God; we see continually held up to us this serious truth, that there is a God above, who looks not with unconcern on the wickedness of men, who views and records their crimes; and from the same love of truth, of innocence and righteousness, which moved

ved him in so fearful a manner to humble the iniquity, the daring iniquity even of a favoured people, he assuredly will punish every actor of injustice and cruelty amongst men ; as well as of unfeeling triumph over the innocent and good, or deliberate opposition to his moral providence and to the laws of right, which he has established in the breast of his moral subjects here. Though suspended, it is not averted: the hand of God, whenever it best suits the views of his wisdom, will fall, will heavily fall on such offenders; and righteousness will one day or other smooth all the uneven ways of men.

This ought to console us for many a strange and much lamented disorder, which we behold in this unequal world. That punishment, of which the Jews are a continued and solemn example, attends every son of wickedness, who lifts his arm against the moral governor of the universe. God views his faithful servants; he views the injuries, the oppression and the cruelty

under which they bow; and, while he will reward their faith and patience and perseverance, he will call their tyrants and oppressors to a dread account.

We are apt to think, in some desponding moments, that virtue has no friend, no protector. But the example of the Jewish nation is a demonstration that the God of righteousness still lives; and the expectation of a day of judgment presents him in a light which may abundantly still our doubts, and awe every bold and outrageous offender.

Let us not then despair of the fate of Christianity. The providence which humbled its first and most inveterate enemies, and still pursues them under their continued opposition to his Son, has punished many an enemy of his religion, many who with an impious and profligate hand have dared to corrupt and to pervert it. In the ruins of the Greek church, which sunk into the lowest degeneracy in those extensive regions where Christianity first arose and spread
itself,

itself, I behold not the inattention of God to the declining interests of the Gospel; but the presence of the God of truth and purity to avenge the just cause of his Son; and to exhibit, in the miserable remnant of the many millions whom Christianity once owned in the eastern world, as in the Jews, a serious spectacle of that punishment, which the debasement of Christianity has reason to apprehend from its venerable patron. From them have been propagated, through Christendom, all the corruptions which have disgraced the name of Christian; from them we learnt to violate the simple faith of the New Testament, to attack the very Majesty of the one Supreme, and place on his throne and in his temple other objects of human worship; from them we learnt to mix the dregs of heathen superstition, of worldly sordidness, with the chaste and moral system of Christ; and they have made the first atonement to the God whom they insulted, to the religion which they profaned. — The usurped dominion of

Rome, that scholar and rival of eastern corruption, that seat of anti-christian abomination, is shaken : though its base was half the earth and its proud head boasted to penetrate into heaven, it is crumbling into ruins, it is hastening to its end ; and presents a picture like that of the offending and devoted Jews. Its once boasted bulwark, that horrid society, which without one feature that is Christian blushed not to call itself by the name of Jesus, has met its long deserved fate in our days ; and at the height of its power and pride has been swept off the face of the earth, without leaving a trace behind. All the blasphemies which they have uttered, all the immoralities which they have propagated, all the persecutions which they have dictated and ministered to, all the horrid deeds, the murders, the assassinations which they have perpetrated or inspired, have in our days, by the directing hand of providence, been avenged in their sudden downfall, in their utter ruin.

Yet

Yet still we think that Christianity looks not with the face that we could wish for, and which her native beauty promises.— But it is not ours to say to providence, in what way, or at what period, it shall perfect its designs, or execute its righteous judgments. The temporary triumphs of the man of sin, even over so benevolent and moral a religion as that of Christ, are amongst the predictions of the same wisdom, which denounced such terrible and lasting woes to the Jews; and that he shall be punished, that he shall be rendered an awful memorial of the displeasure of an holy God, is recorded in the same irreversible sentence. What we have seen, and what we still see in the fate of the impenitent and still offending Jews, and what we have experienced from the secret agency of providence against other great offenders in the corruption and debasement of Christianity, should forbid despair; should assure us, that the cause of his Son is for ever in the hands of the all-wise, the all-knowing, the omnipotent God;

and that what he has counselled shall, in despite of all opposition, be completed; that what he has vowed to cherish and protect, shall not be defeated by the impotent hand of man. Priests and kings may combine in their wicked policy, in a confederacy as with hell, against the cause of truth, of liberty, of virtue, and of happiness, those sacred interests of the Christian dispensation; but the God, who introduced it into our world, who meant it to be the blessing of our world, to be the guide and test of his faithful subjects, smiles at their desperate attempt, and will turn their malice on their own heads, and will give the kingdom to his Son.

The Jews have been eminently favoured; they have also been eminently punished. An awful example to Britain, if she make no affectionate and virtuous return to the Author of her distinguished mercies. The view of British character is perhaps more diversified than that of any other nation in the world. There are, I am persuaded,

suaded, in this island, examples of as pure religion and of as generous and exalted virtue, as human nature perhaps is capable of; there are examples also of superstition, of infidelity, of irreligion, and profligacy, which shew how low human nature can descend, in defiance of every advantage which tends to elevate and inspire her. Examples of the better character may be more numerous, than the outward view of our country would give us any idea of; because virtue is, both in her temper and habit, modest and retired, and finds her gratifications in the calm intercourses of domestic and social life, or in the intercourses with her God; while vice acts her most offensive outrages on the open stage, and stimulated by her restless turbulent spirit, and fearless of shame, obtrudes herself, in almost every movement, on the public view. It is only with God to know where the balance of British character lies; and with God to decide, whether our return to his kindness, and our offering to his holiness be such,

as may avert the judgments which national guilt solicits at the hand of God. No human mind can enter into the counsels of the Almighty, any farther than he is pleased himself to reveal them; but if we may judge from his word and from his providence, the corruption of religion is of all the crimes of man peculiarly offensive to the venerable Ruler of man. I do not confine my view to a corruption in faith and doctrine alone, but extend it to every invention of man, whereby religion may be perverted from her best use, from her influence over the heart and life. A political union of Christianity with interests and views that are altogether of a worldly nature, that are befriended by guilt, and therefore are friendly to guilt, is that national offence which is not estimated in proportion to its malignancy. It is directly opposed to the precepts and to the spirit of the New Testament; it is most probably the object of that woe, which is denounced against those who interpose offences and stumbling-

stumbling-blocks in the way of Christianity; it is the foul source to which Christianity imputes her debasement in the Greek and Roman churches; it is and must be of an evil operation; it corrupts the hearts and annihilates the office of the clergy; it spreads a general taint, and will be sure to find out that last refuge of vitiated man, in the lethargic bosom of superstition and form. The design of the Gospel, and of all pure religion, is to counteract the passions of men, and the dangerous influence of a worldly spirit, by infusing other views and another spirit. The character of all worldly and state religion has been to cherish the passions, and to feed the baser views of man; to confer a sanctity on vice itself, and abuse human nature and profane God by an odious league, which God will not ratify in the other world. To what degeneracy this evil may farther operate in these kingdoms is not to be determined; but no favourable augury can be collected from the experience of the present day. As a man, a Briton,
and

and a Christian, I smile at every enemy, while I can repose on the friendship of the Almighty; but, alienated from God, I have that faith in his moral providence, as to be assured, that the Briton, no less than the Jew, the Greek or the Roman, will be given up to destruction.

These are serious and interesting reflections from the fate of the Jewish nation, from that hand of providence, which has so signally punished, and still continues to punish this offending people.

Let us also learn from them, the lesson of a temperate and virtuous zeal; and never, under the name of religion, depart from one rule of truth, of virtue, or of humanity. Christianity cannot stab herself: truth, virtue, and humanity are her eternal concern; she came from heaven to diffuse their blessed influence. Whoever therefore, and on whatever pretence, violates their infallible dictates, gives the lie to his christian name; and will so far be disowned by that King whom God has raised

up

up to preside over this moral world, and to decide in the great day of impartial judgment who are the friends of truth, the friends of virtue, the friends of mild humanity. Had this never-failing rule been steadily in the contemplation of the Jewish princes and people, however unconvinced of the divine mission of Christ, yet, awed by sacred justice, they would have opposed his innovations only in the way of reason and argument, nor dared to shed the blood of the innocent and just. Had Christians, from whom it was more to be expected, never deviated from this rule, persecution had never borne the image of Christ on her sanguinary banner, nor fixed that disgrace on the christian name which has all the hue of hell.—Let us ever therefore walk through life with the determined purpose, to do no wrong; to follow good only in the way of good; and, if we cannot stem the torrent of what we think to be heretical or unchristian, yet to preserve to ourselves a pure conscience; nor for whatever purpose, nor on
whatever

whatever pretence, ever to act or patronise one deed, which the spirit of christianity abhors.

Lastly, let the example before us be a serious caution against all horrid and impious imprecations. They are as foolish as they are wicked. The providence of God is not at our direction, his thunders move not at our bidding; and happy will it be for many of these sons of cursing, if the mercy of that God, whom they have braved, shall be found in the final issue to determine better for them, than they had determined for themselves. “His blood be upon us and on our children,” is the language of many a bold and unthinking sinner, even in the moment when he doubts the rectitude of his intentions, and makes this bold appeal, and stakes this great deposit to give a credit to his conduct, which he knows it ill deserves.—Thus a monarch of these kingdoms, in a most horrid transaction, rashly vowed; “May the curse of God light on me and my posterity, if I suffer

“suffer this innocent blood to go unpunished!” He did suffer it;—and we may relate the fact—a strange fatality befell his posterity. One left his head upon the scaffold; another wandered long a wretched exile on the face of the earth, and, though restored to the throne of his ancestors, had a troubled and unhappy reign, and was too strongly suspected to have been hurried out of life by the dark hand of poison. The third provoked the indignation of his injured people; he was driven from his throne by the unpitying hand of his subjects and of his nearest relations; and the awful curse has been completed in the degradation, and now, I believe, total extinction of the male descendants of this unhappy family.

Such horrid imprecations are themselves a high crime; every sober mind startles at them; and the God who will not have his throne invaded by the creature of his power, nor the terrors of his justice braved, may fearfully punish this crime alone. The
word

word *damnation*, which many ill-tempered zealots, and many abandoned profligates so liberally throw around them, ought never, no! never to pass the human lips, at least as the expression of our anger against a fellow-creature. Its import, alas, even in the just examples of it, is too dread to be almost contemplated by the human mind; and they who bandy it about in their loose and mad discourse, or presumptuously hurl it as the bolt of vindictive zeal, stand unhappily the fairest objects of it. As the Jews, who pursued with rage their malice against the innocent Jesus, and invoked God to accept the sacrifice, or to avenge the innocent blood, had enough of blood; so may these wanton curses, these dealers in damnation, find, to their dreadful confusion, that they may have enough of damnation. Their imprecations may be forgotten by men, but the God of virtuous remembrance will not forget them, and the time may come, when they shall make an awful atonement for them.

SERMON

S E R M O N. XVI.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND
LAZARUS.

LUKE XVI. 22, 23.

*The rich man also died, and was buried, and
in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment,
and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in
his bosom.*

IT is neither easy nor desireable to make a distinction in the parables of our Saviour, they are most of them so highly beautiful, so admirably calculated to promote the great ends intended by them. The parables of the wounded Samaritan, of the penitent Son, of the ungrateful and inhuman Debtor, are not, in the mere view of affecting and moral tales, surpassed by the most artful

and elegant fables that the wit of man has ever composed. Yet the parable of the last judgment, and this before us, have a solemnity and grandeur from the awful scene which they disclose, and from the fellow-interest which we all have therein, that cannot fail to impress upon them a peculiar dignity and arrest our peculiar attention. No one can read them, without retiring within himself, without being carried as it were into another world, and having his whole soul arrested and fixed on objects of infinitely higher importance than all that this world has to present. In the other parables of our Lord, religious instruction, or moral lessons, are most affectingly conveyed; in these the issue of all our moral doings is exhibited, and with a plainness and a majesty worthy of so grand a subject. If I have not oftener addressed you from these interesting parables, it is because I feel myself unequal to their beauty and dignity, and that they touch me far beyond what I can express. To illustrate, and to point

point their application, may be in our power; but, when this is done, no words that I can find can add to the force with which the native words of our Lord come home to the heart.

Illustration and application are therefore all that I aim at in my discourse to you on the parable of the rich and poor Jew; as the pertinence of our Saviour's representation depends in a great degree on the characters intended to be represented. Inattentive to these characters, we shall not enter into our Saviour's mind, nor probably into the most useful lessons which he intended to convey.

The instruction of Jesus Christ, though of large and universal import, is generally excited by the incidental occurrences which presented themselves in the course of his ministry. With that wisdom which the schools never attained to, he has nothing of that formal parade and distance which rendered the wisdom of the antients inac-

cessible and even disgustful to the many; but intended to enlighten all, the philosophy of Jesus Christ approaches all with the easy and engaging colloquy of a friend. From that striking spectacle of the rising sun, how natural, and yet how sublime is the transition to himself, as rising on the moral world; and, with the splendour of that wisdom, truth, sanctity, grace, and mercy, which he brought from heaven, dispelling the gloom of Heathen and Jewish superstition. How beautiful is the lesson of tenderness in judgment, of sympathy with the frailties of human nature from the consciousness of our own frailty, which the eager inquisitors of guilt presented to him in the person of the woman taken in adultery: Yet, having reproved the officious accusers, he justifies not the accused, but dismisses her with this dignified counsel, "go, and sin no more." The prurient ambition of the disciples James and John, for pre-eminence in their Master's kingdom, introduces the interesting lecture of humility

lity and fellow-love, and of the far nobler ambition of pre-eminence in good. When the affinity of natural relation is obtruded on his notice, he diverts the attention of his hearers to the more sacred affinity of mind; to the more permanent relation which a correspondence of virtue and goodness would establish between himself and his true disciples.

But as the correcting the false religion, which then triumphed alike over revelation and reason, was one great object of his mission; the Jewish priests, and doctors and Pharisees, afforded him the most ample occasion of delivering his most salutary lessons, of unfolding the whole character and genius of his religion. The sublimest doctrines and the purest precepts of the New Testament are in rebuke of their superstition and vices, which they were ever betraying in their impotent attacks upon our Lord.—These sanctified guides, these men of form and rule, are offended at the gathering a few ears of corn on the sabbath

day; and they obliquely charge Jesus Christ with this crime of his disciples. Our Lord not only justifies the act by the most dignified examples in the Jewish history, but instructs us in the character of all external institutions; that they have no value, but as they are instrumental to the good of man, and that the virtues of the heart are beyond all observances whatever.—On another occasion they reproach the same disciples with transgressing the tradition of the elders, and defiling themselves by eating with unwashen hands. Jesus Christ accuses their traditions as being at enmity with the law of God, and therefore undeserving of all regard; when, addressing himself to the people at large, he informs them wherein defilement indeed consisted; in evil thoughts and evil passions; and that to wash the heart is the one concern of true religion.—So also, to a captious question of a Jewish lawgiver, we owe the beautiful parable of the wounded Samaritan, and the fine lesson of considering every fellow-

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low-creature in distress as a neighbour and a brother.—Thus does our Lord mix dignity with ease, philosophy with common life; and, like the great God who sent him, deduce instruction from every incident, from every object; and insinuate that sublime and pure theology, that chaste morality, which has become the standard of truth to human kind, and which the wisdom and experience of two thousand years have not been able to correct or to improve.

It is necessary therefore, on many occasions, in order to enter into its full import and extent, to connect the doctrine of our Saviour with the incident which gave rise to it, with the persons to whom it is directed.—Thus the parable before us, though fraught with the most serious information, the most useful instruction to all, has its direct and immediate application to the Pharisees; and the knowledge of their character is necessary to the very construction of the fable. If we keep not this in view, we know not the person who is there ex-

hibited; we hardly know him in the character of guilt; we revolt from the doom to which he is submitted, Jesus Christ appears to dishonour God as a righteous and equitable Judge, and the history is incapable of any moral application.—The sordid lust of wealth, the intemperate use of it, and its vitiating influence, in estranging the heart from a fellow-creature, in tempting to injustice, to violence, to oppression; are the theme of our Master's lecture in this chapter. But the Pharisees, who constituted a part of his auditory, being covetous, derided him. Our Lord addresses to them a severe and personal rebuke; "Ye
" are they, who justify yourselves before
" men, but God knoweth your hearts; for
" that which is highly esteemed amongst
" men, is abomination in the sight of God." As much as if he had said, well may ye resent my representation of avarice; for ye indeed are they who are self-condemned of this reproach, however you may cover the foul crime by the parade of a false and useless

less sanctity ; ye are they, who sacrifice, to this insatiate appetite of wealth, the sacred debt which you owe to God and to your fellow-creature ; but, in vain do you deceive men, for the omniscient God knoweth your hearts ; and, however highly you may be revered by a deluded people, your avarice, your fraud, your oppression, your sensuality, have made you abominable in the sight of God.

Supposing them therefore to be immediately in the eye of our Lord, and contemplating them in the light in which history has represented them, as devoted to this world, to the lust of wealth, of ambition, and sensuality, as bloated with religious pride, and buoyed up with an immoral assurance of divine acceptance, and therefore callous to all the virtuous lessons and virtuous reproofs of our Lord ; he closes his address to them with this masterly fable, in which he carries them out of this ill-judging world into a world of righteous retribution ; and exhibits one of the most dis-

tinguished of them in that awful contrast, which consists in a sudden transition, from opulence and luxury, to naked suffering, to unmitigated torment; from the dream of being more than a creature of God like their fellow-men, to their being rejected of God, and fixed on the other side of the great gulph, which separates the virtuous from the wicked. He meant, as by one decisive sentence, to humble the pride of wealth, of power, of bigotry; to abase, in the fate of this rich man, all who make riches their God; who neither, in the pursuit nor in the enjoyment of them, have any commerce with those virtues, which alone render them a blessing to the individual and a blessing to the world; for which alone God is pleased to vary the conditions of men, and for which alone he will reward the possessor in the other world.

This unfolds the immediate view and the remoter lesson of the parable, it provides the clue which conducts us through the whole, it solves every difficulty that occurs
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in it, and suggests those other instructions which we may presume to be intended by it.

It solves immediately the difficulty which presents itself from the simple letter of the parable, as if wealth alone, and unconnected with the vicious abuse of wealth, were destined by God to the punishments of the future world. For, connecting the parable with the character of the persons to whom it was directed, it becomes impossible to charge it with such an imputation. We are obliged to consider the rich man as one of the number of the Pharisees, whom our Lord had immediately in his eye; and the term of *rich man*, to be here used as a proverbial or professional name, by which the character of the men before him was designed, and which comprehended in it the vices which accompanied and disgraced their wealth.—The difficulty in this light, on which some have bestowed not a little pains, vanishes at once; and, unless the charac-

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ter of the Pharisees, such as our Lord in many instances represents it to be and as all history confirms it, be not an object of divine notice, of divine displeasure; the representation which our Lord gives of the future disposal of this rich man, is vindicated by the soberest ideas that we can form of the retributions of the future world.

The rich man then is the Pharisee; and avarice, with its attendant vices, is the character with which we must conceive him to be invested.—It is not wealth therefore, but the abuse of it, which is the object of our Lord's reprobation; and we are authorised even from the parable to conclude, that the condition of life in which we are placed by providence, is no mark of the divine favour or displeasure, nor in itself of any moment to us; but solely how we support that condition, and answer to the views of providence in assigning to us that condition; that every condition of life has its proper difficulties, its proper temptations, its proper trial; that not to be seduced

duced by prosperity nor thrown down by adversity, but in either to remember God, and the preparing a mind fit for God, is to answer the great end of life; the design of this probationary state, as preluding to a state of righteous retribution.

The Pharisee therefore is the immediate object, the stimulating occasion of the fable: but, as in every other instance of our Lord's discourses, the instruction is universal; on whatever moral the fable is constructed, that moral becomes a principle of his religion, and is addressed to every professor of it. The general moral is directed to the selfish use of wealth;—but, as other traits of the Pharisaic character appear to be alluded to in the fable, we may not improperly employ the remainder of this discourse in noticing the subordinate instruction which it may be supposed to inculcate.

This parable is an awful lesson to all, who have learnt to prostitute religion to their vices, and boldly arrogate heaven on
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any ground which is associated with criminality. In his own opinion, a Pharisee could admit no fear of his future state: descended from Abraham, and practised in all the rigour and niceties of the ceremonial law, it were almost an impiety to doubt of his salvation. Without temperance, without humility, without sincerity, without honesty, without charity, he still had qualifications enow for heaven, and which could not fail of introducing him to the happy abode of the patriarchs and the prophets. But our Lord reveals the secrets of the world to come; and exhibits one of these confident religionists in that drear abode which he had never dreamt of, and on the other side of the impassable gulph, lifting up his eye in anguish towards his great progenitor, from whom he was so proud to be descended. But a character, that dishonoured his descent, had now formed a dreadful separation: he feels, alas! that virtue and not blood constitutes the true relation to his virtuous ancestor: too late enlightened, he bows

bows to the just sentence; and, with a humility befitting his deplorable estate, he begs that the now happy Lazarus, whom he had once known in all the abjectness of misery, might be sent to minister the smallest mitigation to his torments.*

* I cannot forbear to interrupt for a moment the series of my reflections by the insertion of the following note. — The character of a condemned spirit in the other world is exhibited by our Lord in a view which well deserves attention. In a situation which implies horror to think of, no complaint occurs, no impotent struggling, no envying of the happiness in his distant view, no accusation of his judge; but in that affecting moment, when his prayer for mitigation is repelled, mild and resigned to his own fate, he turns his eye on the brethren whom he had left in the world of trial, and wishes that they might be prevented from joining him in the world of suffering. — Does suffering hereafter, according to the representation of Christ, work this blessed effect; and is suffering under the direction of the wisest, the holiest, and the best of Beings, not intended to work out a rectified mind? is it intended to operate to no better use than the punishment of remediless ruin?

It is true, that the representation is in a parable or fable; but then it is a fable composed by Jesus Christ, who never trifles, who mixes not imagination with truth, who instructs in every word, from whom even in his fables we should expect a consistency with what he knew of God, of another world, and of the dispensations of justice, of holiness, and mercy.

How

How many are there in the Christian world, whom this lesson ought to reach! who, like the immoral descendants of Abraham, assure themselves of a heaven, that pays no regard to the virtues which alone exalt and dignify a man; which, by rendering him of the nature of God, ought alone to fit him for the favour and presence of God!—Why was this Pharisee excluded? Not for a scanty and a doubtful faith, not for a deficiency in external holiness, not for his want of a revered name, to which he confidently adhered; but for those vices, to which some licentious disciples of Christ throw open the gates of heaven. What! and shall they open what their Master has closed? And, under the administration of a righteous and equitable God, shall a gulph be fixed as a barrier to Jewish and not to Christian crimes? Shall He, who is no respecter of persons, embrace that under one name, which under another the holiness of his nature abhors? Horrid impiety! alone almost, and independent of other crime, deserving the just anger of a Being who can have

have no fellowship with wickedness!—You may fancy yourselves to be Christ's; and, like the deluded Hebrew, may persuade yourselves of heaven through your relationship to your Master: but Christ is not yours, unless—I speak what he himself has solemnly proclaimed — unless you obey his laws; unless you act as he did, unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. If the sentence fell justly upon the immoral Hebrew, with how much greater justice upon you, whom all the lessons of your Lord are calculated to guard against such fatal delusions; for whom he has exhibited this serious example; and, if that self-conviction, which must ever accompany the sentence of God, permitted not this Pharisee, under all his torment, to utter a complaint of his doom, to murmur in the presence of his revered ancestor; will you dare to plead your idle faith, your idle relationship to Christ, when across the great gulph you shall behold the Master, who was known to man only by his virtues; whom God hath highly exalted, because

because he loved righteousness, and died to restore it amongst men? Oh! when will Christianity be rid of these shocking impieties? which subvert the very design of Christ; boldly set their front against all his precepts and example; and bid defiance to all his premonitions of the dreadful ruin which attends them. In the picture of Abraham and of this Jew behold your Master and yourselves. Such affinity as he had to this virtuous ancestor, such have you; such only do you plead; and, if there be any faith in the representations of Jesus Christ when he delivered the will of God upon earth, only at the same awful distance shall you contemplate the Master, whose name and character you have profaned by your vices; whose holy laws you have degraded by the same abject state, to which the immoral Pharisee had reduced the law of Moses.

But farther; the parable, in the most pointed manner, exposes and condemns the whole character of religious pride, as well
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as in the instance just mentioned, which is indeed but one of its detestable issue.—For this purpose, the character of Abraham, the petition of the condemned Pharisee to his respected ancestor, and the petition rejected by him, are with admirable propriety introduced. Nothing contributed more to harden the Jews against the mission of Jesus Christ, and indeed to produce that deplorable effect, which our Lord so happily expresses by the light that is within them being darkness, than the pride of being Abraham's descendants and Moses' disciples. To humble this pride, which rendered truth and goodness and even miracles of no effect to them, which darkened the whole understanding and corrupted the whole heart; our Lord exhibits one of their proud fraternity as rejected in the future world, and disclaimed by the very progenitor in whom he prided and on whom he reposed.—Before Jesus Christ taught, the religion of Moses was unquestionably the most deserving of regard, and might lift its head up above all the religions of the earth: but

to be merely a professor, and not a doer of this religion, is declared in this parable to stand the wicked Hebrew in no stead, when he shall pass to his audit before God.—The more merit our religion is supposed to have, the less have we, if we act not up to its spirit; the more have we to answer for, and the more severe will be our doom. To derive a pride to ourselves from the mere possession of a faith, from the mere profession of a worship, which have been imparted to us; argues the understanding to be as weak, as it generally proves the heart to be bad. The merit of any religion is not ours, nor can we plead any but from the use of it; we are all actors in the world of God, and the question with us is, what return we make to God for the advantages which he is pleased to extend to us. The pride of religion, of any form or faith whatever, is reprobated by the whole language and spirit of Christianity. We know of no law, of any age or nation, by which, exclusively of others, the acceptance or rejection of mankind will be decided. Whatever be the law, which a man has received,
and

and which is the best that he could receive, by that law will he be tried; and they, who live without any external law, will be tried by that law which is written in their hearts. This is the decision of an eminent apostle of Christ.

Be it our care then to guard against the religious pride of the Pharisee; the weak immoral pride, which springs out of the overweening conceit of any particular sect, or faith, or profession. Be it our care to guard against that bloated conception, "I am holier than thou;" which leads to arrogance, to obstinacy, to a dangerous security; which prevents enquiry, self-examination, and self-correction; arrests that progress of truth, which is surely never terminated in this world, nor perhaps will ever be in any world of rational existence; but whose most dangerous operation is in seducing and corrupting the heart, in diverting the attention from the one thing needful, the one end of all faith and of all profession, from plain honesty, and goodness, and piety. Be it our care to

guard against this worst character of the Pharisee, if we would guard against his future doom. Of all the courses which we can take in religion, there is not one which promises worse; which will be more likely to debase both the head and the heart, to turn it from the path of simple duty; and often in the midst of even damning vices, if I may be allowed to use so harsh a word, to poison it with the vain conceit of a paradise prepared for its reception, of a God engaged to reward its useless and barren profession.

This parable also not obscurely presents another feature of religious pride, viz. the confining salvation to itself, and committing to damnation all the world besides. It would seem to be with this view, that the character of Lazarus is introduced, and especially, that his history is carried forward into the other world. He appears to be exhibited as one of those abject sons of suffering, whom the self-sufficient and unsympathising Pharisee was accustomed to consider

consider as born in sin, and accursed from the womb; and to be translated by our Lord to a world of happiness, in order to correct the rash judgment of proud prosperity, and vindicate the judgment of God, as to every human being, on the only honourable ground of interior and moral worth. A partial election, and a general reprobation was a distinguishing trait of the pharisaical character, which our Lord often severely reproveth; and which the liberality of his religion, and the expanded views of the divine providence, which he so carefully inculcates, ought for ever to have excluded from the faith of Christians. The parable before us exhibits one of this narrow faith, suffering the sentence which he had often too freely passed on others; and the poor creature, whom in his pride he had often looked upon as an heir of God's wrath, received into the arms of Abraham and to the abode of the blessed. — A home representation! which many a bigoted and uncharitable Christian ought to tremble to look upon. To denounce, with pride and
wrath

wrath denounce, eternal punishment on a fellow-creature, perhaps for a difference of opinion, for a difference in the mode of worship, and almost for a difference of name; is a very unpromising symptom of our own fitness for a better doom.—It is also very remarkable, that of all the Christian sects which have made so free, and at this day do make free, with this very serious business, not one of them has ever done it from even a decent plea; not one of them has had much of the truth or excellence of Christianity to boast of in themselves. The assignments of futurity are the province of God; and man discovers a very immoral spirit, to say the least of it, whenever he dares to pronounce the future doom of his fellow-creature, unless in the general denunciation of God's displeasure against all wickedness.

The last lesson, with which I wish to conclude, is, from the example before us exhibited in so awful a contrast, to avoid with our utmost care whatever is peculiarly characteristic

characteristic of the Pharisee. I have already noticed his pride, his hypocrisy, his assuming confidence, his uncharitable judgment; — I would last caution you against his uncompassionate selfishness, his lust of wealth, and his intemperate abuse of it. The terrors of futurity are strangely eluded by many of the vicious actors in this world. It is perhaps that the mind of man cannot in this world bear the certain expectation of the fate of the condemned, though many, alas! may be reduced to the dreadful necessity of bearing hereafter the reality of it. But, either by driving the thoughts of it utterly from their minds, or by some phantom of superstition which they conjure up for their present relief, or by some vague and indigested notions of God's mercy, or by some delusion of a repentance hereafter to be undertaken, they contrive to extricate themselves from the terror of a doom, which they have a secret presentiment that they deserve.—For, how some of the rich men of this world can have any rational expectation of the happiness of the world to come,

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is beyond my religion to say. The manner in which they live, their forgetfulness of God, the debasement of their minds in avarice or sensuality, or both; their vile abuse of their Creator's bounty; their hearts shut against the godlike virtues of charity and mercy, as though they had no fellow-creature whom their superfluity could bless; require indeed a very different religion from that of Christianity to find a heaven prepared for them. If they be capable of thinking to better purpose, this parable is peculiarly held forth to them. Here they behold the history of one of their order; his history in both worlds; and, so far as their life here resembles the life of this wretched Jew, they have reason to fear that their life hereafter will also be like his; that their pride, and pomp, and luxury, and selfishness, will have the same issue; and that death, when it shall introduce them to the great Judge of character, will remit them to the same fate.



